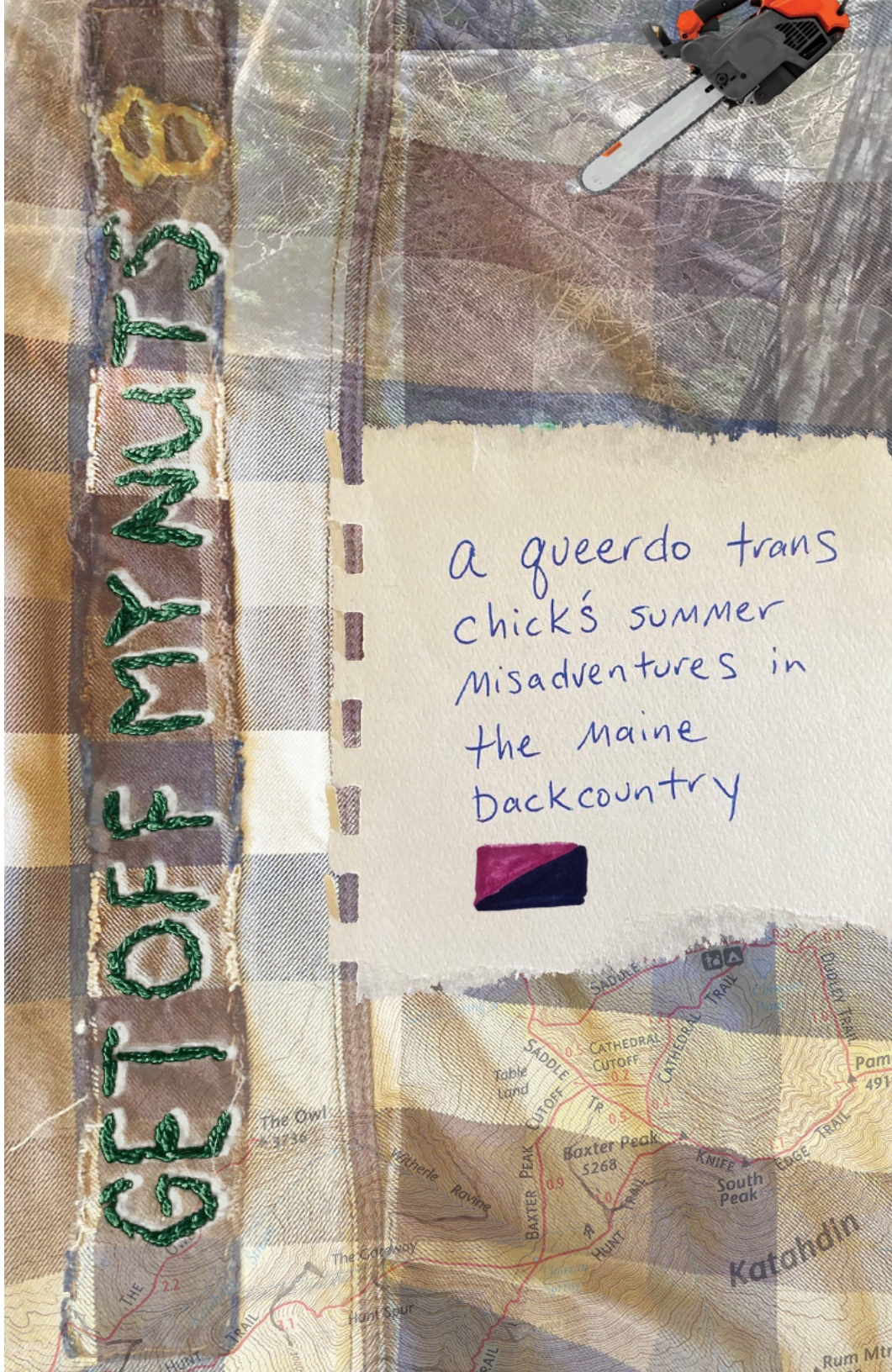
BAXTER STATE PARK
SCIENTIFIC FOREST MANAGEMENT AREA
BAXTER STATE PARK
Traveler Mountain detail
Russell Pond detail
Little East
Northwest Cove
Pine Point
Second Lake
Boody Brook
Togue Ledge
Trout Brook Farm Campground
Frost Pond
Hudson Pond
Webster Outlet
Wadleigh Mountain
Trout Brook Crossing Picnic
KP Dam
Trout Brook Mtn
Long Pond Pines
Billfish Pond
Lower Fowler Outlet
Lower Fowler Pond
Middle Fowler North
Middle Fowler South
Sci. Forest Kiosk
South Branch Campground
Lower South Branch
North Traveler
South Branch Mtn
Black Cat Mtn
Upper South Branch
The Traveler
Burnt Mountain Picnic
Burnt Mountain
Morse Mtn
McCarty Mtn
Howe Peak
South Traveler Mtn
Strickland Mtn
Lord Mtn
North Pogy Mtn
South Pogy
Pogy Pond
Sable Mtn
Wassataquoik Lookout Trail
Little Wassataquoik Lake
Wassataquoik Lake
Wassataquoik Lake Island
Center Mtn
Center Pond
Caverly Lookout Tr
Russell Pond Campground
Wassataquoik Stream
Nesowadnehunk Field Campground
Russell Mtn
North Turner
Ledge Falls
North Brother
Slide Dam Picnic Area
South Brother
Davis Pond
South Turner Mountain
Doubletop Mountain
North Katahdin Lake
Mt Ojl
Hamlin Peak
Foster Field Group Area
Chimney Pond Campground
Roaring Brook Campground
Katahdin Stream Campground
Katahdin
Bear Brook Group Area
Kidney Pond Campgrond
Abol Campground
Daicey Pond Campground
Golden Road
West Branch
Abol Bridge Campground
Abol Beach
Rum Brook
TOGUE POND GATE
VISITOR CENTER
winter parking
Hurd Brook Lean-to


GET OFF MY MAIN
a queerdo trans chick's summer misadventures in the maine backcountry
Baxter Peak
5268
South Peak
Katahdin
The Owl
Table Land
Saddle Tr
Cathedral Cutoff
Cathedral Trail
Dudley Trail
Knife Edge Trail
Baxter Peak Cutoff
Hunt Trail
Witherle Ravine
The Gateway
Hunt Spur
Rum Mtn

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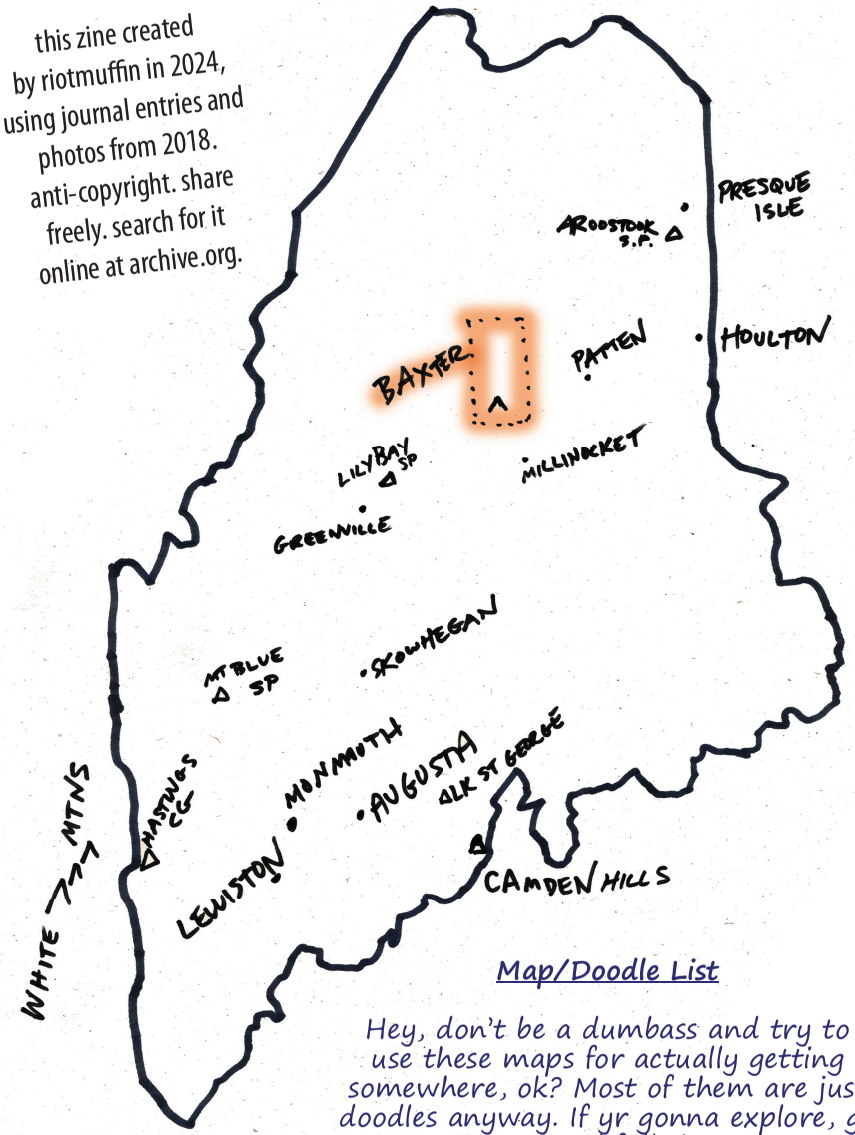
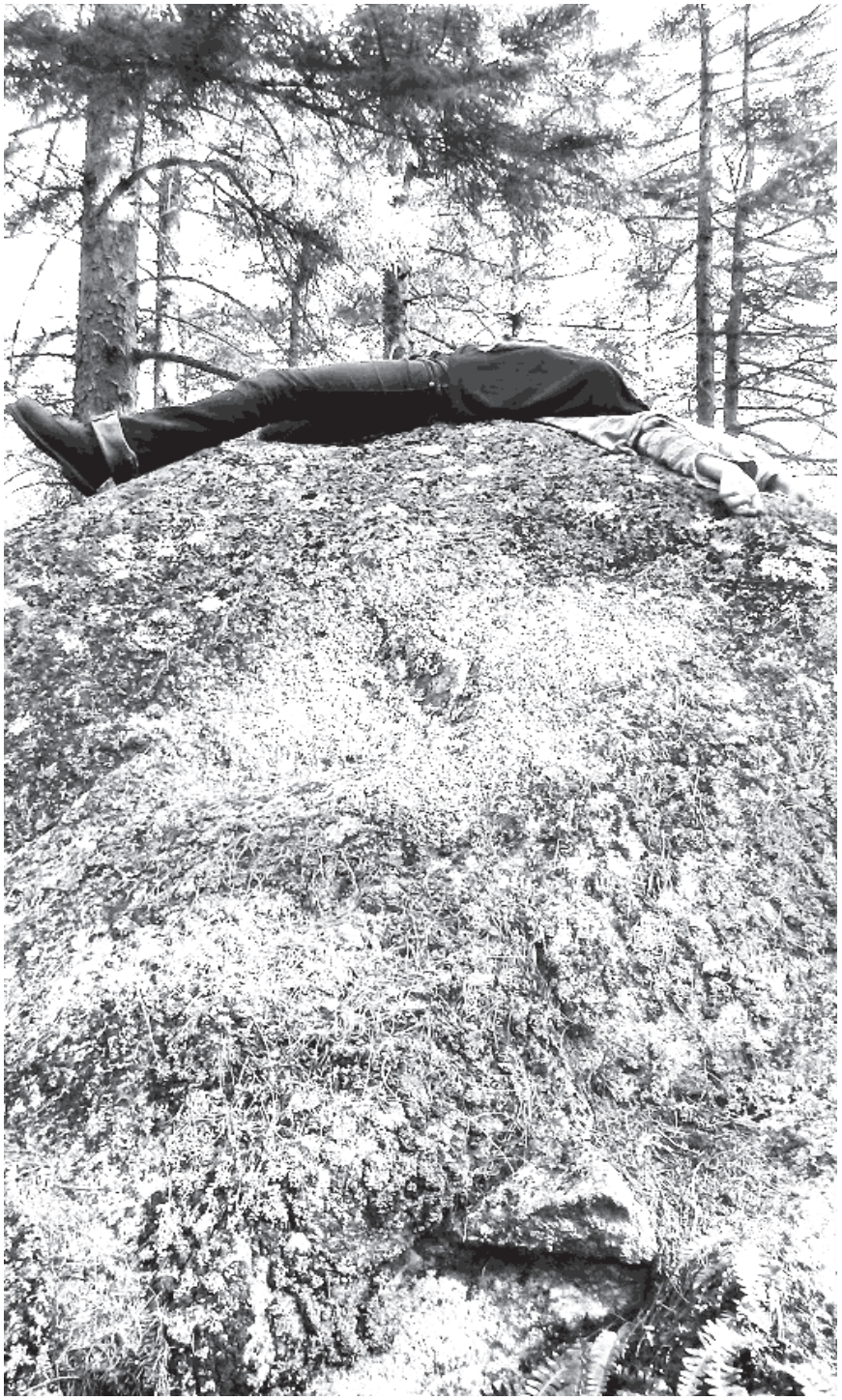


Map/Doodle List

Hey, don't be a dumbass and try to use these maps for actually getting somewhere, ok? Most of them are just doodles anyway. If yr gonna explore, go get an actual full size map.

Baxter State Park overview – back cover
Minnesota to Maine road trip – p. 6
Pogy Notch Trail – p. 20
Northwest Basin Trail – p. 26
Wadleigh Brook & Frost Pond Trails – p. 43
Traveler Mountain loop – p. 63
Hunt Trail (Appalachian Trail to Mt. Katahdin) – p. 72



that direction or caught up in nearby trees. I laughed, and then I slept in the car with Linden that night, who had driven up to join me. We hiked together the next 3 days and had a blast.

In 2019, I had my gender affirmation surgery. I'm glad I did so, but there were lots of complications. That's a story for another time.

In 2020, COVID and the George Floyd Uprising happened. I dove into the police abolition movement. In the years since, all the outdoor groups I know of have ignored the reality of the ongoing covid pandemic which has left so many of our friends and fighters newly disabled. My own physical fitness has suffered a lot, but I've got my hopes up for another solo Great Lakes bike trip, soon.

I don't know when this will happen, but someday I absolutely have to go back to North Baxter to share the places described in these journals with the people I love.

Muffin

March 2024

Introduction

Having just quit a lousy bizjob in Minneapolis, in 2018 I decided to spend a summer in the wilderness and explore the possibility of some kind of "career" (lol lmao - I will never have a "career") in the outdoors. First I interviewed to be a bicycle tour guide in Alaska and Yukon Territory, which sounded real cool until I wised up and realized that the awesome scenery might not totally make up for babysitting rich tourists from cruise ships all summer long.

Ultimately I took a gig with an Americorps program, the Maine Conservation Corps (MCC). The original Conservation Corps, a key program of the New Deal from 1933-1942, was famous for its wide-ranging work developing and maintaining infrastructure in rural and wild areas, facilitating outdoor recreation to promote conservation. Today the Conservation Corps name is used by various state level programs and nongovernmental organizations, many under the auspices of Americorps. Americorps is a U.S. federal program that allows certain kinds of employers to pay less than minimum wage to young people under the guise of "building job skills", "national service" and a buncha other bureaucratic bullshit, some of which will become evident in this zine.

Why Maine? I'd like to give a grand reason, perhaps having to do with Maine's natural splendor, abundant wildlife, and temperate climate. While all these things are true, the reality is that a big part of the decision hinged on me being 32 years old. Most Americorps programs have an age limit of 25. MCC was grandfathered an exception to this rule, and as I soon discovered, they pretty much take anyone who applies, so that's where I went.

To prepare for the journey, I bought a cheap old Subaru wagon and threw a big ol' craigslisted roof box on top to hold more gear. Half the back was taken up by my disassembled bicycle plus camping gear, with the other half set up with a cot for sleeping on top of food and clothing storage bins.

The crew I was assigned to spent the summer working in Baxter State Park, Maine's largest wilderness area. The park is rustic in nature and, like much of Maine, quite a ways away from many modern amenities. It's a separate and unique entity from the rest of the Maine State Park system. The southern half of Baxter is home to Mt. Katahdin, the peak of which marks the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail, the popular 2,198-mile hiking trail stretching from Georgia to Maine. My crew, though, was not assigned to the Katahdin region. We were assigned to the northern half of the park, which is even more remote.

First, though, I road-tripped from Minnesota to Maine via Ontario and Quebec, visiting friends along the way - the start of that trip is where these journals begin.

Most of the content of these journals is transcribed verbatim from how I wrote it at the time. Journaling is how I keep my mind fresh and engaged on solo trips, of which I've taken quite a few. [Previously, I made a zine similar to this one about my bikepacking circle tour of Lake Superior. You can read that if you wish, here]: https://www.crazyguyonabike.com/doc/?doc_id=20075

Some of the entries have been edited for space, clarity, further explanation to the reader, or other reasons. Some names have also been changed, and less-interesting details omitted.

While I'm sure the systemic criticism you'll read here of Americorps programs still holds (my advice: Avoid!!!), I haven't kept up with MCC in the intervening years, so I don't know how much the issues described in the following pages are still true, or not.

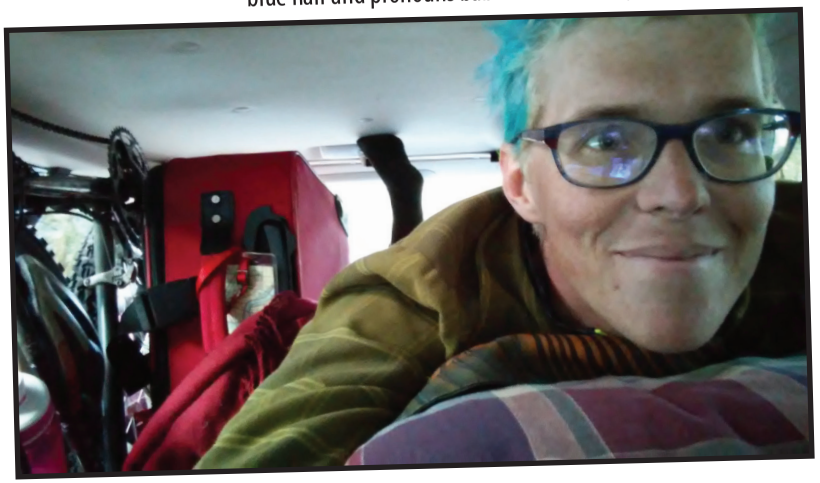
About the author:

Muffin is a white, queer and genderqueer trans chick living in the Midwest U.S. She's a proud anarchist troublemaker who loves making zines and other agitprop, and exploring wild/wilder places from a bike, backpack or an old dinged-up subie.

If you want, you can send her an email: ryeitmuffin@gmail.com. You can also venmo her a few buxx to make her smile @RyeItMuffin. If neither of these accounts or technologies are still in existence by the time you read this zine, send a smoke signal or ask a punk.

March 2024

blue hair and pronouns babe in her subaru, on her cot



Linden and I on the Superior Hiking Trail near Grand Marais, MN

Epilogue

A month or so after returning to Minnesota, missing Trail Crew werk, I signed up for a four-day volunteer event on the Superior Hiking Trail, a gorgeous 310-mile trail running along the north shore of the great Gitchi Gami (Lake Superior). We worked on a small trail reroute and foot bridge construction on a segment near the town of Grand Marais, where those of us non-locals camped in the group area of city campground along the waterfront.

I hoped to put my summer experience to good use, while also being part of a crew of folks perhaps comprised of older, wilderness-wise, more sensible people. On Day 1 I impressed everyone with my long-distance chainsaw-carrying technique (see pic page 28 - slide the saw upright between your back and your pack). Pretty soon though, I was getting misgendered constantly, and felt quite discouraged.

Settling into my tent after dinner on Day 3, the wind picked up, howling at gale force across 200 miles of open lake from the northeast. It was probably the noisiest wind I'd ever camped in, but with periodic adjustments, the tent remained earthbound. Eventually the gale calmed, and I got a good night's sleep. The following morning, after hearing the forecast on my mini NOAA radio, I packed up the tent to stash it in my Subie, despite one more night of camping ahead. I told the rest of the crew I didn't want to risk it blowing away during the day. "Oh, I don't think it'll be that bad," someone said. "You'll just have to set it up again when we get back, though!" said another.

That day on the trail numerous snags crashed down nearby in the wind. Back at camp, we found significantly fewer tents at our site than before. One, of course, was in my car. Another was seen riding the waves of Gitchi Gami, far out to sea. Others were blowing freely in

August 28 - Fremont, OH county park
Didn't journal yesterday due to too much driving. Dropped off Luna at a park near the canal north of Rochester and she continued eastbound. We traded truckers hats - my Penobscot Outdoor Center one for her pink Dakota Cyclery/Maah Daah Hey Trail one (a trail in North Dakota that now I oughta do!). Then she hit the road.

I peed in a bottle while driving in Cleveland traffic. So talented!

7pm - Rock Cut State Park, Illinois
A tent site here is just $12. Its been drizzly, and a chance of storms tonite. I hope it knocks the hot and muggy right outta here - the tent is less than pleasant again tonite as it was last night, when I set up the tent with no fly as it was too damn hot to sleep in Subie with little airflow. The gate attendant here misgendered me as well, but was otherwise nice. Maybe I should score myself a super girlie middle name to use, to help alleviate this...

A gas station in suburban Chicagoland offered a mouthwash dispenser with little cups in the bathroom. I know how to take a hint, so I had some. 8pm now - big tstorm light show starting up, radar shows lots of red - here goes!

August 29 - Rock Cut State Park, IL
It rained literally all night... some huge thunderboomers right on top of the campground here that had me up and kneeling on my pad, in case lightning were to strike my site, and ready to "bolt" (ha) should the tent not hold up in the wind/rain - but it seems to have done great. Possibly the nastiest tstorm I've ever experienced while inside a tent. But all is well (and my pee bottle is plum full).

I called my fam in Minnesota to confirm my planned arrival later today. Mom said some spots nearby got 6-12" of rain - lots of flash floods and road closures. I took a walk around the couple campground loops here - no huge limbs down, but buttloads of acorns and walnuts. I picked a good tent site, as many others have standing water. Forecast is cloudy and 60s today.

August 30 - Minnesota
Got here around 3pm yesterday. Mom and I spotted chimney swifts going into a big chimney nearby... we counted 625!! And she said her record for that chimney is over TWO THOUSAND.

Back home and back in society, I've got so many feels to be had. The question "What can I do about this?" is so more frequent and apparent, and the answers so much more complicated, complex and numerous - and sometimes seemingly unreachable or undoable.

April 30, 2018 - Minneapolis
Night before the journey begins. Had dinner with Natalie (my roomie) and Linden (my sweetie) at the gay diner with the awful but hot waitstaff and the amazing biscuits and gravy. Linden says, "Sometimes it will be lonely and frustrating, but it will be lonely and frustrating in new and different ways."

This is a pulaski. One side chops. Other side digs.

They also say, "Don't murder anyone with a Pulaski."

May 2 - Bessemer, MI.
My route northeastward took me thru Duluth, where I stayed with a friend last night, then through the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. In Duluth I hiked out to the end of Minnesota Point, the longest freshwater spit in the world. Only a little snow and exactly one step worth of ice remained on the trail. There's a long-abandoned building with a bunch of cool graffiti. Very cool ice formations along the shore - 50 yards of crashed ice with blown sand like I've never seen before.

All the rest stop potties are locked... first peeing-in-the-woods of what I suspect will be many this year. (I am very experienced at peeing in the woods, and even, on occasion, pooping there. This will not be a problem, except perhaps for the whole I'm-a-girl-with-a-dick thing.)

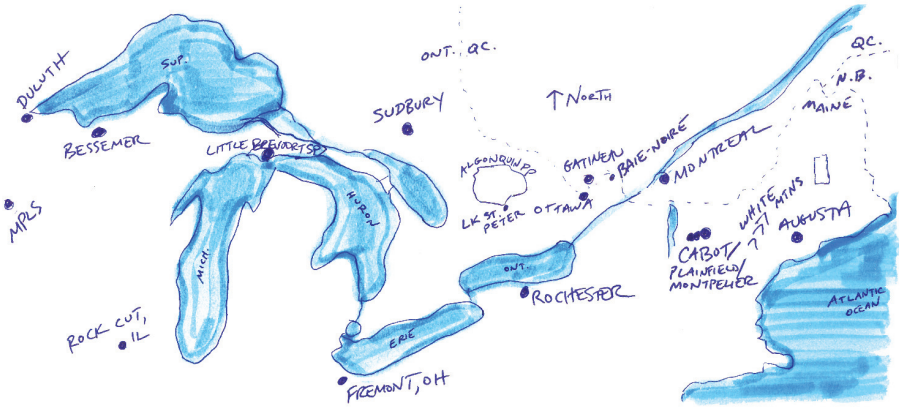
Ottawa National Forest, Paint River Forks Campground - Watersmeet, Michigan is "Home of the Nimrods"! Lots of black spruce and white pine here. Saw skunk cabbage coming up at the visitor center earlier. All the RV parks around here advertise "hook-ups"... sadly I don't think it's the kind of hook-ups I would want.

May 3
Made corn pancakes with coconut and rhubarb for breakfast. Yum!!! Well, less pancakes, more pan crumble. Challenging on my pocket rocket stove. I will aim to improve upon this...

Little Brevoort Lake State Forest campground, MI -Things from today: braked for a humungo porcupine ambling right down the middle of the road. Silly dude! Got up to 55 degrees. A few snow piles still around, including at my campsite. Clearly someone before me has been giving these chipmunks food. Took a couple mile hike with my new Timberland steel-toe boots. They were comfy!

May 4 - Sault Ste Marie Michigan
Been raining since about 2am. Drove thru St. Ignace and passed the MI Weird Wax Museum and the WORLD FAMOUS MYSTERY SPOT. It remains a mystery to me. There are pastie shops on every corner.

4:30pm Finch River, Ontario - Feeling pretty annoyed with myself right now for running low on gas - should've gotten it back in Sudbury where it was cheaper. Currently I'm pulled off at a parking



lot of some trading post featuring "Washrooms for Customers Only!" and "No Overnight Parking!!", to get a break from the driving rain... which is supposed to continue for another couple hours.

9pm Back in Sudbury? Yep! So at the trading post, I wrote on my tinder profile, "Anyone wanna put up a travelling blue haired queerdo for a night?" And now I'm staying on Sarah's couch! With her big, friendly, BORK-TASTIC doggo. We went on a walk with her and the neighborks teeny tiny dog and it was hilarious. We had dinner and hot cocoa together and life is good. This def beats staying in my car, despite backtracking on mileage. Oh... and she's got plenty of anarcha/queer/pro-sex-work propaganda all over her apartment. I gave her some of my own agitprop, and she's hooking me up with her fam's land near Algonquin for tomorrow night, and potentially people in Ottawa. 10/10 would swipe right again!

May 5, Sudbury
Doggo slept with me last night... #blessed. Pancakes and eggs for brekkie. About to hit the road.... car fluids good, stomach full, place to park tonite secured. Amazing.

Algonquin Provincial Park, Hardwood Lookout Trail - The day use fee here was SEVENTEEN dollars!!! I have no more pretty plastic monies left. Also, sometime in the past few days, my clumsy ass left my trekking poles behind. I got one single use out of them, lmao.

930pm - Aaah, socks off... feet much happier now! In my car in **Lake St. Peter,** at Sarah's family's empty lot with a shed, fire pit and parking spot on it. Did 4 short hikes at Algonquin. Passed a large gaggle of humans gawking at a roadside moose... must've been 20 cars worth. Later on Hwy 127 I saw a moose and stopped maybe 70 yards ahead of it. Got out my binocs to look... and then a pickup pulled over right next to the moose and it ran.

My highlight was the Spruce Bay trail - turned a corner to face a very pretty grouse... stayed still and in a few minutes the grouse waddled to within 10 feet of me! Great look at its spiky hairdo. The

scale: one toe = approx 3 feet (36 inches)

been scarfing down disgusting but good "watermelon candy" from Marden's. It has beef gelatin, yet is halal. No kidding. also got some "Lucky Lobsters" (candy) for Linden. I wonder if there's such a thing as lobster gelatin....

Walked down to a new big long suspension bridge over a stream near the campground. Apparently the prior bridge was destroyed by Hurricane Irene, whenever that was, as was a lot else in this area. On my walk back I saw six grouse foraging together - the whole fam! Upon return, I proudly hung up my pink and black flag at my campsite. Hey, people hang their shitty USA flags all the time.

August 25 - Rochester NY
Went through 4 states today! NH weird. VT weird. NY weird.

Green crabs. Goofy Apollo 8 astronaut. *[Note: I have no idea what these things in my journal were referring to. A radio show maybe?]*

August 26 - Rochester NY
Thanks to the magic of okcupid, I met up with Luna, a sexy as hell trans chick cycling from Olympia, WA to Boston, and its been lovely beyond words. Yesterday we split the cost of a hotel room and enjoyed staying up late and: - watching nature documentaries - making out - showering! - fucking - going to the grocery store for a slick 100% discount - fucking - falling asleep together. And this morning: fucking - continental breakfast

We went to the old Victorian cemetery here in Rochester and found the graves of Frederick Douglass and Susan B Anthony. They are both rather unassuming compared to many others, but much loved. Tonite we're sharing a campsite at Webster Park, a short hike from the southern shore of Lake Ontario, north of town, before we each go our separate ways tomorrow.

Luna is, without a doubt, easily one of the hottest and also easiest-to-spend-time-with people I've ever met. She's been on the road since mid-June, has a serious tan (and serious tan lines) to show for it. She spent a week in Minneapolis on her way due to an injury, and liked it a lot. She's also got too many awesome patches and stickers on her bike to list... not to mention a deer skull and feathers for decoration.

Deidre got back to me in the nick of time before I left Augusta, and we had lunch at a sushi place. Our talk was pleasant but a lil discouraging to me. D said that MCC Director Sarah was about to the point of just letting me choose my own team for the fall! Ofc, this was never conveyed to me. I wonder if I'd have felt differently about leaving if we'd been able to have more real in-person convos before. D talked about the really "toxic" environment amongst the staff up until a year ago, and that the group is still recovering from it. I can see the staff seem to mostly mean well - but I didn't sign up, nor was I hired to, help their org get back on track. D said Sarah wanted to know if there was any way I'd consider coming back. I said now, no, but in the future, if I'm put in charge of training, lol.

atop Mount Jefferson

D says she really wants to try and work w/ people w/ rough experiences - like Richard, whom she says she picked up again sleeping in a park in Lewiston :(She also said that this year has been extra rough in many ways, and that when she was a team member, then leader, she thinks the environment was quite different, and hopes there will be positive change soon. I hope we keep in touch.

August 24 - White Mountains National Forest
1230: I'm on top of Mount Jefferson! I took the Caps Ridge, the shortest trail to the top. A not too bad 2.5 mile/2500 feet climb up from Jefferson Notch Road, a winding lil gravel road on which I saw a bear crashing across! There's a bunch of little rock outcroppings at the summit here, one of which I'm sitting under to shelter from the heavy wind. Mounts Adams and Washington (the tallest peak in the east) are visible, but partially obscured by the fog/clouds/haze. I'm feeling ok - though coughing and congested a lil. I may or may not try to do Washington tomorrow... the shortest hike I think is a 10 mile round trip. I know you can drive up there, but that's no fun to me!

7pm: Back at the campsite. Wish I'd not kept my tent up here for the sake of having the site clearly claimed, since there were nice empty dispersed sties along the Jefferson Notch Road. Oh well, couldn't have known - maybe another time.

What I remember most about today is all the shiny mica flakes and chunks everywhere. There was also a huge erratic with lil dimples that looked like a giant footprint. Earlier I felt great, but now I'm sneezy, coughy, watery everything, headache. Just gonna lie down and keep my head up. Had a tasty chicken noodle soup pouch for dinn. Also

Good doggo

Hemlock Bluff trail had lots of icy spots, so my slip-on boot trax got good use. Lot of fun terrain and ice formations. I feel like I should be doing some longer hikes with a heavy pack to prepare more for Maine. Next week when I'm a lil more "settled" with Jac and then Poa, maybe I can.

May 6 - Parc de la Gatineau - Chelsea, Quebec
430pm - Driving thru Ottawa was stressful... first big metro on this trip. Potential contact there didn't come thru, so I'm kinda winging it. I've found a lil pique-nique area in this big ol park with a big ol gravel parking lot, where hopefully I can spend the night relatively hassle free. The actual campground, alas, is not yet open for the season. I drove all day in shorts and a bra/tank but now it's a lil too chilly for that after a hi of 68 earlier. Saw another porcupine!

May 7 - Timmy-Ho's in Gatineau, QC
It's a beautiful morning... and alas, I got a way too early start to it after being woken up by the sûreté (cops) at 4am. They read the note I left on the windshield but decided to wake me up anyway. At least they were, I guess, as less-unpleasant as you can be when being a cop and waking someone up rudely. Also they anglophoned just fine (I don't speak French). Didn't even make me get out of my sleeping bag, and never actually said I couldn't be there, but they did run my ID before they left. Ofc I couldn't get back to sleep.

Parc Nacional de Plaisance - Baie Noire - Sightings: So many birbs!!! 2 pileated woodpeckers - hawk with rabbit(? or other small mammal) in its talons! - big beaver lodge - first dandelions - 1st butterflies, including a blue skipper - thousands of geese!!! - it's so green! - buncha yellow bellied sapsuckers - hairy woodpeckers, flickers, yellowbutt warblers, palm warblers.

(later) In Montreal, at Jac's! - Got here and he's been super welcoming. We took my bike & Jack took a rentalbike and we did a lil tour - visited a brand new big-ass rad community center just opening this week! We met their friend Lola & ended up walking around the place w/ some (anglophone) queer hotties - there's a car mechanic shop, bike shop, BREWERY, all kinds of stuff - a PRINT SHOP where everyone started taking clothes off to print things on before Jack got antsy (and a phone call from their kiddos) and wanted to head out, so alas I obliged. (Turns out Lola is in a monog relationship anyway, so no missed chance there, despite my prurient interest.) It's super cool to see so many folks on bikes here. Also we met the "neighborhood rambler". He had a green beard, bought the local punk a chien kid a pizza, and yelled "I AM KRISHNA QUEBECOIS!"

May 8 - Montreal
Jac is at work, so I biked to the top of Mont Royal. Good workout! Now I'm sitting at the ridic giant cross at the summit having impure

thoughts. Got an email from Maine Conservation Corps saying - one week out! - they need a social security card, which i did not bring. They will have to deal.

May 9 - Montreal
Jac and I made poutine. Yum! We walked around the park nearby; the pond had only a lil water, but nonetheless we saw a great blue heron catching lil fishies. Also lots of bats flying aboot. There's a corner where all the punks and crusties hang out; they were having some kinda party with translucent jellyfish hanging from all the trees. I'm up early to get an early start to Vermont, where I'll get to have lunch with Poa!

May 10 - Cabot, VT, at Poa's yurt!
Got here yesterday at lunch and found a cute lil roadside stand for fish and chips. Then bopped around nearby Montpelier. We indulged the aforementioned prurient interest after waking up in the middle of the night, then did so again this morning outside the yurt. Did I mention we're staying in a yurt?! It's so cute! I've been volunteered to help at some event tonite. Been having some of my usual feelings of overwhelm around someone else's oodles of friends... whatever. Just gotta remember to take some me time.

May 11 - Vermont
The event thing was called Vermont Vaudeville and I was voluntold to help people park their cars, since most of the population of the tiny town we're in was coming. I quickly noped out of this duty after the person paired with me decided she knew far better how to do it, and became downright insulting and mean. I figure she had it under control. The show was so-so. Excellent fundraiser cookies, tho.

Went for a walk in the nearby woods this morning. Blooming trout lilies and trilliums! We got to harvest a smidge of the rhubarb coming up on the farm. Lots of maple syrup lines up here, which was neat to see.

May 12 - Vermont
Even tho I am so different than Poa in some ways, we have tons in common too and I'm so so thankful for their support and generosity these past few days. Among the things in common: while helping them at the community garden, some lady started a conversation with me and after a few minutes, we realized she thought she was talking to Poa! I guess we're doppelgangers. One more night of snugglin ourselves and then its off to Maine in the morning for me

May 13 - Lake St. George State Park, Maine
I'm here! A busy day of travel, re/packing, and a short rendezvous with friendo Catia, to complete the penpal trifecta on this roadtrip. We had a delicious Indian buffet in Lewiston and then I was introduced to MARDEN'S, a most excellent discount salvage/surplus store chain. Apparently a rad bookstore in Boston shut down :(and this place got all their books. Catia got like 5. I settled on TANK GIRL! Also picked up some cheap deet, motor oil, and gloves.

When I arrived back at the campground, K & Mars were feeling better, having taken a shorter hike the opposite direction on Hunt. They just seem like such a lovely genderqueerdo team to me rn :) I'm rather bummed they didn't want to spend more time together this week - but I'm glad they'll be getting back to life together, and I think I'm ready to be back with Linden in Minneapolis, too - I probably won't dawdle much on the drive home. I just have such feels around happy queer couples. All sorts of feels. They took off before 6am this morning towards Roaring Brook, with the hopes of seeing a moose. I slept in til 9. Now to the library in Millinocket. Ciao for now, Baxter.

3:30pm - I checked out some cheap state-managed campsites off the Golden Road going southwest of Baxter, but all were occupied, so I'm back here at the Outdoor Center for tonite. Someone commented approvingly on Subie's "I <3 Weirdos" bumper sticker.

August 22 - Lake St. George State Park
6:30pm - Had a nice pizza lunch in Millinocket with Mars & K, said goodbye and then headed south. I'm hopeful/optimistic we'll be staying in touch. Got a new cheapo phone (for still too much $$) at Mall-Wart in Bangor. The plan was for lunch with Deidre in Augusta tomorrow, but I haven't heard from her yet, so we'll see. I was considering staying again at Mount Blue tomorrow, but now I think I'll skip it and head for the White Mountains in New Hampshire, if the stars align. (I also haven't heard from Poa in VT).

Tons of blackbirds here. A much different looking campground from when I first arrived back in May, now that it's almost full. Someone gave me a tip "as a fellow Subaru owner" about a great Amish salvage place nearby.

August 23 - White Mountains National Forest
(this morning at Lake St. George) - Two lil kids are riding endless loops on their bikes around the campground road. "Don't even bother trying no handlebars. You'll fall off." I'm an accomplished cyclist, but I'm with ya, kid.

Feeling kind of sick. Last night was miserable and I didn't sleep much in my tent. If I still feel this way tonite, I will def just try sleeping in Subie on the cot. This morning's agenda is Bagel Mainea, and also somewhere with throat lozenges.

8:30pm: I'm ensconced in Subie at Hastings Campground, White Mountains National Forest (home to the presidential range of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and the other colonially-named peaks) - just on the Maine side of the the border. That's after a major misadventure at my original destination, Dolly Copp campground on the NH side. Apparently, even though I paid for a campsite, because I did not first set down a lawn chair or tent or teenager upon it, it was not "rightfully" mine, and so another family ended up occupying it even though I paid first! Thereafter, the old lady attendant repeatedly misgendered me (I'm almost sure it was maliciously), and refused to refund me until I insisted several times. JFC. Then I left to find somewhere else, ending up here.

the way down I found the orange flagging tape marking it, so I gave it a wander – thus very much confusing a slow-paced old man whom I subsequently hiked past twice on the current trail! Aaah, fresh stone steps, not yet touched by the hiking public. Johansel, who is working this section in the fall, will be upset – the stumps the last crew left are not tall enough to be able to remove with a griphoist.

Before the alpine tablelands starts, on the edge of treeline, it gets very steep, almost more like bouldering than hiking at times. At one spot there are 4 metal rungs within 200 ft or so, without which it'd be extremely difficult if not impossible to get up and down. Much of the trail thru the tablelands has string fencing due to the critical habitat zone and high traffic. All the plants are teeny tiny, and almost all I have never seen before. Pretty soon you can see the cloud over Baxter Peak, and it's only a half mile of climbing to get there and be rewarded with the "cathedral" view of all the peaks surrounding Chimney Pond way down below. Such a gorgeous panorama – makes me ticked that Mars had to share it with such jerks! (They did say the view is what kept them going.)

Before turning around at 12:40, I decided to hike the 0.3 miles out to South Peak along the Knife Edge, the narrow rocky ridge notorious for its steep drop off on either side. It wasn't as scary for me as some people make it out to be. If I'd had more time (and interest in another descent then ascent) – I'd have taken it out to Pamola. I sat near South Peak for several minutes as a huge raven flew up and sat just eight feet away, enough for me to see all the details in its feathers and face. It looked well fed... trail mix, I'd guess... and was hardly concerned with hikers going back and forth.

Sometime I'd like to explore another way and see Chimney Pond and Roaring Brook, but with Mars back at Katahdin Stream, my route was pre-decided. Ran into some boy scouts, a couple of whom had run out of water. I showed their group the wonders of bleach-flavored water, I as used my mini bottle of bleach to disinfect some stream water for them.

This state park is really just a campground and picnic area. Not terribly private, but nice to have a spot right along the lake. No service on my cell either – oh well. I want to do some sewing, but now it's dark... got my things mostly ready for the big 1st day tomorrow, when I'll be up early to drive to Maine Conservation Corps HQ in Augusta.

Check out this motherfuckin yurt!!

May 14
Up at 5am.... didn't sleep too great. A lil red squirrel is rushing about outside the car. I will be moving more methodically.

11:30am, Monmouth – Lots of milling about upon everyone's arrival at MCC HQ. Made skeptical faces at a guy with a fuckin confederate flag hat – and friendlier eyeballs at a couple friendlier-lookin potential queerdos? After herding all us cats, the staff shuttled us all half an hour to this boys camp on a lake near Monmouth where training will be. It's been super disorganized. The bunkhouses are gender segregated, which seems childish. However, nobody is bunking with me yet, perhaps because of my new superpower... INVISIBILITY! I haven't been acknowledged much at all. There is also a dog – hope nobody is allergic, because nobody asked...

6pm – Hey... made it thru Day 1! (almost). MCC staff person Deidre came up to ask me about pronouns and talk about justice stuff a lil – and a couple people complimented my "bye bye patriarchy" cap. Odds that a dude will comment on it? Slim!

I'm a smidge excited to run a chainsaw tomorrow. Classroom chainsaw training today was good.... the "people skills" part has been kinda lacking. Bros gonna chill. Deidre said they were limited by time constraints and used to do a 101-type gender discussion at these intro trainings – nah, I feel like they chose not to. Extend it by a day, yo! I will be more critical in my next conversation, I think. Also re housing: it's not like gender-seg vs mixed is an either-or proposition. Ask preferences at the intake.

Before I left VT, Poa said: "Find yourself a friend, even if it's just a nice tree." Here, the dog, Hickory, is becoming a friend – she's deaf and blind, and very adorable.

May 15 – Monmouth Camp
7pm Mostly a good day. Field chainsaw training Day 1. Starting to pick things up... not the slowest in my group, anyway. (Altho I am worried a bit about Eva, who seems to be having a hard time, but at least is outwardly upbeat, if a lil awkward). Dudes taking up waaaaaay too much space, with one guy in particular (Will) hogging

everything, littering, and running his mouth stream-of-consciousness style. Rain in the afternoon was fine. Apparently, the section of Pisgah Mountain we worked in had a big blueberry patch that has long been overrun, so taking out trees will return it closer to its prior state and help the original habitat thrive.

These cis women in here are so weird lol. Wonder if anyone's thought that taking a shower without a full curtain isn't so much an option for me? or that i'll have a lil quest to find a quiet tree somewhere to shave in the morning? Also why are people soooo into smores... get a grip y'all. Basic!

May 16 - Monmouth Camp
morning - Hickory jumped on my bunk!!! #blessed Successfully completed my morning shave mission. Saw trilliums and lots of chipmunks and squirrels, and I think I heard a loon?

evening - I almost disclosed as trans to a couple folks today, but did not. Will snapped off a dead branch when I was about to start sawing, and it hit me in the helmet. He also uprooted a tall skinny birch for absolutely no reason. Part of his general pattern of acting all macho, and proceeding to fuck things up. lol and yikes.

Deidre says we are likely to get state park passes by Friday, which will allow us to camp for free in lieu of MCC providing actual weekend lodging. Had a happy lil stress relief circle w/ bunkhousemates Eva, Mars, and Arianne after dinner (pasta with tofurkey sausage, sauce and fresh veggies!! yum!) after everyone else left. Felt good, even tho I didn't come out (as trans. as queer, yes). Eva is into tank girl!!! Mars is in a group with all men today and tomorrow... uffda.

May 17 - Monmouth Camp
Grumpy grump morning. Slept badly - woke up at 1am thinking about our convo about patriarchy in this fuckin mismanaged group. Solution: saw 'em. Then some ridic dreams. In the last one, hordes of sandhill cranes, pelicans and canada geese were floating down a river. Twice a giant pelican went up to a goose to headbutt/chomp it, and the 2nd time I (and probably everyone else) woke up with a audible yelp. Over text, Cory said my morning gets a... BAD YELP REVIEW

At 6am I looked in the mirror and saw a tick on my FACE. A lot of folks here seem to have poor tick prevention/safety and thus i think it is quite likely it hiked in on someone else. or else i just missed it in my own clothes check.

It's 51 and sunny, and a full parking lot worth of people have gotten a head start on Hunt ahead of me. Here I go!

11:45 - I'm now at 5,268 feet on top of Katahdin, "The Greatest Mountain"! At first there was too much fog to see much... but then, within 30 seconds, Chimney Pond and the whole basin appeared below. It's a glorious view.

It was 5.2 miles up via Hunt, and I did the last 2 alongside a couple of Appalachian Trail hikers who shared my speed and attitude. The good conversation made me feel better about going solo. Valkrie, a Danish woman, did the entire AT northbound with her mom, though she complained about the "purists" who would diss them because they did skip a few sections due to mom's health. In fact, mom wasn't up for the last 3 miles or so today - too steep.

I was originally planning not to bother with any photos, but up here I reconsidered. Turns out my phone has a big new crack and won't turn on, anyway. Whatever. Damn nice mountain, this. I'm going to hike the Knife's Edge ridge before turning around.

9pm - Now making dinner at Mars & K's campsite. All is well. Day was swell. I'm ready to go home.

August 21 - Katahdin
Recorded the states of license plates here at Katahdin Stream trailhead: ME x6, CA, VA, MT, NJ, MD, MA x2, MI, NY x2, VT x2, GA, LA, PA, NH.

11am - Stopped at Togue Pond Beach, on my way out of Baxter. I suppose readers of this journal, if there are any, will want a further account of my Katahdin hike, so here goes. I was expecting to be grumpy, given my solo status and the multitude of annoyingly loud hikers. Thankfully they turned out to be the minority. Lots of people on their final day on the AT, and I fell in for a bit with Valkrie as well as a guy who was finishing his flip-flop section before heading back south for the rest of his thru-hike.

The 1st mile of Hunt from the CG is flat and easy; a nice lil stop near a big waterfall on the stream, then gradually climbs. A section has water flowing down it - MCC is working on a reroute here, and on

lunch before I leave Maine. I told her about Jean's lack of safety boots. Sorry, Johansel.... but if you didn't know by now I was gonna do that, it's your own damn fault. Mars ended up talking to Deidre for quite a while too, about Will and her team's antics and lots of other shit.

I also talked with Sunshine, who is a newbie for the fall who joined another team for the final summer hitch. She sounds like someone I'd like to get to know, and I'm bummed about not being able to share a season with her or Josie, another newcomer I met at the Wreckognition who spent their last hitch with Mars' team, to Mars's appreciation. I'm also worried about what their experience will be like - we gave them lots of advice. Sunshine told me about why Team Leader Louis was absent for Wreckognition: he dropped a bucket of gravel on Beth's hand, injuring her. He was clearly at fault... and then tried to convince Bethany to not file an incident report about it. Beth, good for her, said "no, of course I'm going to file a report - I can't work now!" - and she also told the office the whole story, leading to Louis' suspension.

Tomorrow my plan is to drive back north and camp at Penobscot Outdoor Center just south of Baxter's south gate.

August 19 - Penobscot Outdoor Center
6pm - All packed up for tomorrow already, and making dinner at a nice lil campsite next to a pond. Passed two (2) flea markets on the way, but assured myself I did not need any fleas, so I did not stop. Even just approaching Baxter from the south, it feels like a whole new and exciting park. For one thing, there's a clearly marked emergency helicopter landing zone as you approach.

8pm - Sat by the pond (I'd call it a lake, but those two terms are very ambiguous in these parts...) watching a great blue heron stalking dinner, framed by a big orange and red sunset in the background, and to the north a tiny cloud over Katahdin morphing into a bigger cloud, the only one into the sky, and settling over the Knife's Edge ridge. No wind - the only tiny ripples on the water are from bugs. Earlier, a Very Normal Looking Man complimented my "Bye Bye Patriarchy" hat.

Setting my wakeup time in the morning for 4:40.

August 20 - Katahdin
7:30am - I'm at Katahdin Stream at the Hunt trailhead. Sadly, Mars didn't arrive to pick me up from the parking area outside until 6:45, quite a bit later than planned, which caused me a fair amount of anxiety. They say they're not physically and mentally up for hiking the mountain today... So, I'm going to hike the Hunt trail solo, instead of our previous plan to drive over to Roaring Brook Campground and take that route. I'm disappointed, but also understanding that Mars has spent pretty much the entire season up on the mountain, and needs to put their needs first. Their campsite with K is right up against the day use parking area - got to be obnoxious, but will make it easy for me to find this evening after I descend.

Evening - today was super obnoxious, so much that - don't really wanna write about it. saws didn't work. leaders dumb. what EVER 4 EVER. chili was great tho. our crews make dinner separately, but all under the pinnic shelter - ours was the 1st to have dinner ready 4 days in a row. rockin it. and, while everyone else was finishing dinner, i took a shower all alone :-)

Mars reminds me of my metamour, Jen, back home. I have big bruises down my legs from trying and failing to start the chainsaw so many times.

May 19 (didn't journal yesterday) - **Camden Hills State Park**
Here with Eva, Mars and Arianne, who have pleasantly seemed to latch onto me a lil bit. Sightings: 2 barred owls really close! who-cooks-for-you-ing while being chased by a crow! - bright yellow goldfinches - lots of woodpecker activity - chipping sparrows - juncos - turkeys - dumbass gendered single toilets

We had a good long convo during/after dinner where most notably (to me) I came out as trans, which was received so nonchalantly to the point that i had to reiterate it to make sure they heard. THEN, when Eva & Arianne went away, Mars came out to me as trans-masc! But they want to keep it on the DL, understandably. Nonetheless, it is super refreshing and hopeful to me to have someone like them around right now. If by wild chance we end up on the same crew for the season, i'll be over the moon.

Eva is also pretty rad - has been criticizing the prison system and settler-colonialism and the like - but unlike Mars, seems to have very little outdoor experience. Arianne is harder to get a read on. She didn't have anything to say during our queer/trans convo, and boasts about drinking & smoking weed a lot, neither of which are my jam. Thinking she may not have ever thought about trans folks before. Nonetheless, she's twice now gravitated towards us 3 queerdos (I'm assuming Eva would consider herself one too, altho she hasn't outright said so).

Both Mars and Eva have the same REI tent I do.

May 20 - Camden Hills
The ocean - Penobscot Bay to be precise - has been fascinating to my midwest ass. Lots of weird seaweed! Mollusks! No seabirds tho this morning. Drove to Audobon's Project Puffin Visitor Center a ways down the highway, and (amongst lots of puffin facts and paraphernalia) also learned that the loons here are almost double the size of loons in MN - up to 12 lbs, thanks to a shorter migration.

May 21 - Monmouth Camp
Back here and got the same bunk, thanks to Mars saving it for me! These is a "gender neutral" cabin this time - but it's already loud and obnoxious, Mars says. The thing is, you gotta plan ahead when you do that, not just have a free-for-all. People people. Arianne is next to us too, with a lot of new folks. Eva is typically slow and behind, so shit outta luck for our bunkhouse this time, it seems. Yesterday we saw the barred owl again, again chased by a crow.

May 22 - Monmouth Camp
I'm writing a bit less since... sort of shockingly... I'm a little interested in actually... talking to people. We got in a real fun hour of soccer/volleyball kickabout this morning. Later we had a "The Talk" that Deidre and Team Leader Joel led, about some anti-oppression stuff. There's a trans woman of color here now too, B. She's a returning MCC'er, though doesn't seem very outdoorsy whatsoever, which is odd to me. And our personalities don't really line up.

K, who I'm also clocking as a trans woman, has just arrived, and I helped her find their chores and a bunk. She asked about pronouns right away! I wish there was just an easy way to mutually disclose, and that we could form a kickass trans girl gang. K talks a mile a minute and says she's very social and that she ought to have no big problems as long as her mental health stays okay.

May 24 - Monmouth Camp
Just as I was starting to fear becoming more well-adjusted, today I chose to just not participate whatsoever in this terribly stupid bureaucracy-mandated americorps disaster volunteer center roleplay nonsense that has nothing to do with our actual intended work tasks. And nobody cared! Yay! I also called out the presenter on his pro-bureaucracy Red Cross/Big NGO-worship crap, thanks to Jean describing the disaster of what has happened in his native Puerto Rico during the last nine months of hurricane aftermath there.

Did some basic tool/trail technique stuff this morning... first rock smashing! Tried to strike up a convo with B. She said she loves the off-hitches because everyone parties, and that MCC is like experiencing "the best parts of being a kid, like camp and college, all over again." Uhhhh, that's gonna be a no, ope.

The rest of the misfit gang is planning with Eva to celebrate her birthday by imbibing copious amounts of alcoholic beverages, so I may be doing something else this weekend. (Also, Eva and unknown others woke up a bunch of people by singing loudly at midnight... smh)

May 25 - Monmouth Camp, last day here
I don't totally know what I'll be doing this weekend, but I suspect that it'll be fine, or that's what I'm telling myself. Mars knocked over my phone last night and the screen cracked a little, but not that bad - I hope they don't fret about it too much. I'm not going to bother shaving (today is day 3! usually i keep it at max 2) - we'll see how that goes. Fuck anyone who cares anyway :-)

May 26 - Camden Hills State Park
The news from yesterday - I am going to North Baxter! Several crews are going to be stationed at Baxter State Park, Maine's wilderness gem and rustic home of Mt. Katahdin, the northbound terminus of the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail. The AT and popular tourist spots, though, are in the south of the park. We will be in the more remote north. The team is crew leader Johansel, assistant team leader Jean, Rian, Angie, Eva and I. Not too shabby? The men should possibly be less obnoxious than average, perhaps? I hope I may have nipped some potential shittiness in the bud by being a lil more open about myself

important as teaching how to use a pulaski or a chainsaw - then you're not doing your job.

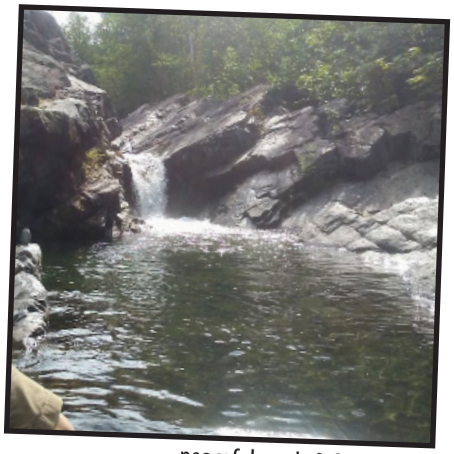
So I ask you to seek out people to help you start doing your job, if not for everyone who gets needlessly pushed away from the conservation movement and from being an outdoorsperson, then for the sake of your own kids and grandkids enjoying wild places, because as I said - we are damn good at protecting things.

I wish I would feel as calm and in control about that sort of thing leading up to it, as how calm and in control I feel when I'm actually doing it. I could see some people looking mighty uncomfortable in the back. Later, when Will got up and gave a whole presentation talking over the rest of whatever team he finished the season on, I sat up on top of the picnic table we were sitting at with my back facing him. It felt fuckin great.

Later, at the potluck outside, I spoke with a (non-MCC) Americorps program coordinator who was in attendance, who very much appreciated what I had to say. She revealed that she is also soon quitting her job because of the bureaucratic nonsense. Meanwhile, I nonchalantly saved the nearby sheet cake from an errant volleyball shot. #winning

This morning, we went to a diner that was absolutely slammed by MCCers out for breakfast, since MCC declined to provide one for this dog and pony show. Across from us, a table walked out without eating or paying. The staff seemed so overwhelmed, so I tipped $20 on the $26 bill for Mars, Arianne and myself. Spending time with Mars has been great - we shared a tent last night.

August 18 - Camden Hills
Mars and I camped here together last night, and I'm here again tonite, solo, as they went to pick up their partner K at the airport in Bangor. Mars decided it would be best to spend tonite and tomorrow alone with K, especially since it's been 2 weeks since Mars had any alone time at all given their last 9-day hitch. I was a lil disappointed - but also if it was Linden coming to visit me, we'd maybe want the same thing, so I can't be upset.


peaceful pools & falls along south branch ponds brook

Yesterday we all had to return to the MCC office in Augusta to return tools and do paperwork. My team was among the last to leave. I ended up talking to MCC Lindsay for a while, who is less of a jerk than email made it seem, naturally, as well as MCC Deidre, who says she wants to have

trust Mars' judgment and whatever we decide to do, chances are high we'll do it together - and then soon, go home and have a bigger impact somewhere else.

I could really use a hug, though.

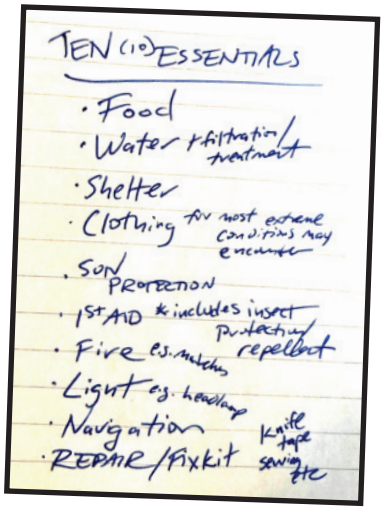
August 16 - Skowhegan
Well, we're a park on Lake George (not to be confused with Lake St. George... only so many lake names to go around) for Wreckognition, as Mars was worried MCC will try to fuck with their paycheck if they don't attend. There is a crew "olympics" contest happening currently, but instead I'm hanging with 2 of the MCC Environmental Stewards, Jesslyn and Alexa, who have been stationed at Rachel Carson Natl Wildlife Refuge. Mars wanted to steal a slice of pie from the pie-eating contest, but they wandered off to not-sure-where. Close to where I'm helping Jesslyn & Alexa set up their tent, there's loons swimming!

I emailed my "notice" from the Millinocket Library.

August 17 - Skowhegan
At the ceremony yesterday, each team was given time to do a lil presentation. During ours, I speechified something like this, which I'd rehearsed in advance.

> If part of your strategy to protect wild places is to help get people outside so they will learn to love wild places, then you need to get EVERYONE into wild places so that everyone helps protect them. The woods don't have any learned sexism or racism the way all people do; the lakes have no contempt for queer and trans folks; wildlife isn't ableist or classist; mountains treat everyone the same without any preconceptions; their summits don't care what we sound like or look like or if we fit their idea of an "outdoorsperson".
>
> And btw: if you want to protect these places, nobody protects things better than people who have been marginalized and pushed aside, bc we've spent our whole lives, as have our ancestors, protecting ourselves and our communities with everything we've got. From people who value us for sex appeal instead of intelligence, or from people who want to institutionalize or outright kill us because of who we are, from teachers who called us retarded bc we had an accent or lame because we moved awkwardly, from people who wanted to just forget about us because we didn't have a permanent home, from people who wanted our loved ones locked up because they used drugs or simply existed with the wrong skin color.
>
> So yeah, we know how to protect things, and we like going to wild places to get away from all that crap. But people who value conservation aren't immune to it, and when you let it slide, you're pushing your best protectors away. So if your job involves mobilizing folks to protect wild places, but these kind of issues don't really concern you; if you don't train your leaders to have a clearly anti-oppressive framework, or if you think teaching people to be good to one another and see each others' full selves is not as

at our first team meeting (I didn't say "trans" - but I did say genderqueer and talked about pronouns, and stopped Jean after he joking said "she" for himself).



All 3 of the men are BIPOC, with English as their 2nd language - Jo is Black/Dominican, Jean puertorriqueno, and Rian Indonesian-Australian. Angie is from Wisconsin and is the quietest/most introverted of the group, but she's plenty sociable camping this weekend with me at Camden Hills again, and I think has a good attitude. She's 20, clearly has quite a bit of access to $$, as she's been telling me about her fam's RVs and toys and adventures and her own solo national park trips. Pretty normie but friendly. And then ofc there's Eva! Yesterday we determined she is mostly attracted to men after all, and so we do not need to worry about any on-hitch coworker feelings... but platonic cuddles are a possibility?

The whole crew from last weekend went to Bradbury State Park, which is apparently the party locale of choice. Eva texted to say "it's overwhelmening..."

Couscous curry recipe, for reference: 2 pks (?) couscous w/ flavor packet (can save for later) -- raisins/craisins -- carrots --almonds/cashews -- kale? garlic? -- cumin powder -- dehydrated milk (I have a stash of a couple dozen packets).

May 27 - Camden Hills
This month has led to me having a different relationship to my sexuality than I've had before. There's something about pleasuring oneself in sleeping bag that can be quite... intense (in-tents, har de har)? I'm currently on a bottom surgery waitlist, but I actually haven't felt as much dysphoria lately as I expected.

This morning I hiked to the top of the jewel of Camden Hills, Mt. Megantic00k... all, uh, 1,385 feet of it (started from sea level, though!). I am resisting the temptation to make the sign say MegantiCOCK. Awesome ocean lookout. Lots of spruce, juncos, lil brown birds, chipmunks and squirrels. Also, lots of trail features I find myself analysing with a trail crew lens. On the way down I saw 2 black and white warblers very close up!

May 28 a.m - stopped at **Lake St. George Picnic Area**
Later yesterday I took the bike up the multi-purpose trail at Camden Hills - quite steep at first and left me huffin and puffin. Then leveled out. Very pretty. Saw what I first thought was a skunk, then decided was a goofy lookin porcupine. Then took the roads back. Angie says tonite she plans to get "the most white girl tattoo ever done."

4pm - Jamie's Pond Wildlife Management Area, near Augusta. Parked here at the boat landing for a place to chill for awhile, and it's breezy, cool, and nice. Obnoxious afternoon tho. Did not find the desired protective phone screen cover at Target. Then went to Mall-Wart, which is enough in itself to make a day obnoxious. Gurgle gave me bad directions here, but now I shall sit for a while. Breathe. Relax. Smooshie. Mrrrr.

I did not shower at Camden, which I am a bit regretting now. I'm just a weirdo and I don't find showering in unfamiliar places pleasant, eh? A passing fisherman tells me there's a campsite on the island here a few hundred yards out. I've got all my gear and pack sorted for tomorrow. Listening to the leaves whilst laying on my cot in the back of Subie is very nice.

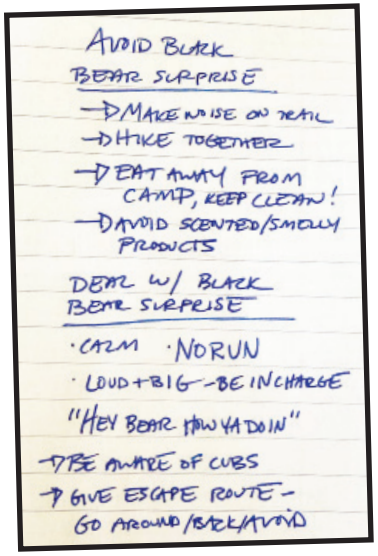
May 29 -Augusta
Sleeping in the MCC parking lot ended up being fine (I'm anxious after my previous early morning police entanglement), but I did not sleep well. Not so comfy - I should've added another blankie. Last evening I walked around the Vikes Arboretum - very simple but neat. I saw ALFRED'S HALF ACRE LARCH PLANTATION and a lilac grove - lotsa chestnuts - heritage apple orchard - hosta garden - lots of swallows - and best of all, I had a brief but nice call with Cory back home.

5pm - We've made it up north to the town of Patten, filling up on gas before heading into Baxter. A long, frustrating day, but almost at our destination. Time to switch journals now.

May 29 - Baxter State Park, Trout Brook Farm
(it is not actually a farm, though it used to be. Now it's a big wild field near a rustic campground, trailhead, and ranger cabin, half of which is currently housing our crew).

10pm - We've made it. The blackflies and skeeters are numerous but the cabin is happy and bougietastic by my standards. Communal sleeping upstairs; downstairs, a kitchen with propane (though we can't figure out how to turn it on...) stove, sink and fridge; bathroom with a small shower stall, one private bedroom, and a wood stove for heat when needed. Also a spacious porch and large lawn in back.

I've packed myself up and damn, this is gonna be one heavy pack tomorrow. Our assignment is hiking in 8 miles to the middle of the park, where we'll stay for 9 days. We got this tho. It's gonna be purdy. I'm sleeping on the second floor for now, but it's hot as heck. The system is for all of us to rotate cooking duties in the evenings,



here are mountain cranberry, and I think the weird big blue ones are alpine bilberry. Speaking of berries - Eva's pie was (sort of) a success. She made it Monday night, but was not happy about how it turned out, so she put it in the freezer and was even considering tossing it. BUT she offered some to Jo and I - and it's really good!! What remains a mystery, though, is the source of the wild blueberries. She insists they came from the field here at TBF. Skeptical, I just walked around and confirmed what I already knew... there are no blueberries here (they prefer higher elevations). The field has too many tall grasses which would crowd them out anyway. There are, however, oodles of blackberries beginning to ripen, as well as some raspberries, so one certainly COULD make a fruit pie with TBF ingredients.

Rian has increased his bubble firepower, with a bubble gun.

Being here I've noticed myself questioning my intelligence, like... "are there really no blueberries here"? (of course there's not!) And being around folks who don't listen to women/value our intelligence really helps me understand why so many women don't trust ourselves. E.g.: hiking back today, Jo pointed out to me the burned old stump with spruce growing inside, saying how cool it was. It was the exact same stump I pointed out to him and Richard a few weeks ago. At the time he shrugged and said "I've seen lots of those." Guess to some people, it's only cool if a man sees it first.

August 15 - Trout Brook Farm
Spent the morning corridoring on Frost Pond. Possibly my last north Baxter hike for the foreseeable future. Big but short-lived tstorm this afternoon - apparently Patten lost power for a bit. Rian and I had just enough time to repack the trailer with all the items we had taken outside whilst re-organizing - and to catch Eva's tent blowing away - before the torrential downpour started. Later, on the way to the north gate to pick up Jo and Angie (who had gone into town), I stopped to clear some branches from the road, and when I got out of the car I flushed THREE great blue herons.

I stayed up later than usual being silly with Eva, who is in a better mood. She appreciates my collection of ridiculous tinder profile screenshots. Tonite is the last night at the cabin, and tomorrow I'll get to see Mars! I'm curious whether they want to - or more accurately, whether they feel like they must - attend the Wreckognition festivities. I feel a lil weird about not letting my team know my plans, and that if we don't attend, I may not see the crew again. But - I

At the end of the day, there was a delay because nobody knew where Jass was. Arianne ended up solving the mystery: Jass got so pissed at Dylan (for unclear but likely understandable reasons) that she hiked waaaaaay ahead on the trail and sat down for some alone time. Needless to say: we will not be co-working with both teams tomorrow.

I have entrusted Arianne with my secret! She is also very much not keen about continuing thru the fall, but says she really wants the extra tuition forgiveness that comes with it. What a shitty system for dangerous (or any) work - get people to not rock the boat/call out bad behavior/set boundaries for themselves, by just taking away a big lump sum of money even if they make it thru 99% but not the last 1% of the term. FUCK AMERICORPS. Arianne, who tends to not talk much, is pissed that others have been making rude comments about this. I told her I think she talks the perfect amount.

August 14 - Trout Brook Farm
I remembered another thing about Jass' short-term disappearance yesterday. After I mentioned to Jo what was going on he said "She's not our team member - not our problem." As Dylan's team were fanning out to search, Eva said "I don't see why they're so concerned". Yikes.

10am - Eva's behavior gets more and more odd as time goes on. We felled a blowdown that had a blue wayfinding blaze and flagging tape on it, so I put the flagging on a nearby tree, to which Eva took great offense for some unknown reason. It was amusing for me to hear her ask for about the 73rd time this season, "What's a blaze?" She's taken to calling everyone she doesn't like "fucking retarded," and I wish I'd made an effort earlier to knock out the wildly ableist language in this group. In my defense, the first 6 weeks I was mostly just trying to keep us alive and addressing the even more ridiculous stuff happening while Jean was here.

Later - aaaand the show continues to entertain. Eva decided she didn't want to wear... a shirt. After Jo laid down the rules, Eva cheekily decided to exploit a technicality by taking the shears from the medkit to cut up her MCC shirt into shreds and put it on. Oh, this is gonna be interesting, I thought. Jo sent her back to the car. In other Eva-tainment, I noted that she had set up her tent in the yard without the fly this morning, presumably to air it out. There was a 30% chance of rain, but since she "can take care of herself", I said nothing. It did not rain on us out in the SFMA, but turns out it did rain here at TBF.

Ranger Liz stopped by again and confirmed to us that the trails we're on are most often used in the winter. Here we've been working a lot close to the ground; do we have a pole saw to reach branches at winter height (accounting for snowpack)? No, we don't.

I looked at the guestbook on the porch of the other side of the ranger cabin. It goes all the way back to 1973!! I also looked closer at the interpretive signage there and learned the low-to-ground red berries

with each of us responsible for our own breakfast/lunch/snax. Angie & Eva made shrimp alfredo tonite - yummy.

May 30 - 5am - Well that was probably the worst night of sleep I've had so far.

7:30pm - Whatever Fuckin Pond crew cabin we're at [it's Russell Pond]
It sucked. a lot
but it could've sucked more
this cabin is teeny tiny with zero privacy. one room. a sink, but we supply water from the pond. 4 bunks. there are 6 of us. Jo has graciously volunteered to take the floor; Jean, the toolshed. everyone's being loud af in here. The outhouse is nice, with a wooden moon carving and an ample supply of sawdust.

That was the slowest 8 mile hike ever. I was in full old lady mode. Thank the lorde Ranger Liz, the Baxter/MCC liason, joined us for the trip to help with gear. We took waayyyyy too much stuff, so we cached a big gas can & chainsaw bar oil container at like the 5 mile mark. We also took waaayyyy too much weight in food. Turns out, Johansel did not actually visit this site at his prior "site visit", so had no idea what to expect. Figures. To get here, we drove from Trout Brook to South Branch Campground, were ferried by motorboat across 2 super-duper clear water ponds by Ranger Jeff, then started our hike at 10am. We got here at 6:45pm. That's 8.5 hours for 7.5 miles. Oye. Things we saw: 2 hummingbirds - Mt Katahdin in the distance - white lady slippers - cool unknown purple flowers - trilliums - woodpeckers.

May 3 - Russell Pond
It is Thursday. Rian has boxers that say the name of every day of the week around the band. Except he's missing a Monday. Yesterday (Wednesday) he wore Tuesday. There is a thermometer outside our tiny cabin, and currently at 5:30am, it's sunny and 48 degrees.

I went for a short stroll to look at the lake, and saw a common yellowthroat! Cool to see the line of peaks to the south. No alpine zone on these, though, and Katahdin is not visible from here. The pond is littered with big glacial erratics protruding up above the surface with their own little ecosystems - some even have their own small trees!

Did I mention that when we checked in at Baxter HQ in Millinocket, we weren't even issued our own maps?? Johansel has one for the team. I purchased my own. Since we're supposedly going to be splitting into 2 a lot, I will be making sure each group has one of our maps. Fer chrissakes. Is the sign [see next page] just for show???

Lunchtime - Today we are taking it "easier"... which to start with meant moving a buncha heavy-ass logs and gravel for campsites. We've decided to focus on the logs and after two team carries of 1/3 mile or so, have settled on shuttling them via canoe instead - one person paddling the canoe with the log strapped on, and two more in another canoe to help carry it into place upon arrival.

I'm glad I permethrin'd my clothes - it really makes a big difference. There's lots of bugs, especially with how sweaty I've been. Having my perm'd sun hat on makes a noticeable decrease in the swarm. Hot and mostly sunny today in the 80s now. The hot cross buns birds (that's what Linden and I call white throated sparrows - their call sometimes sounds like the song) are singing loudly. The leeches in this lake are ENORMOUS - like 6 inches long. yikes! Yesterday, Ranger Liz tried to explain the concepts of conservation versus preservation. The Baxter State Park philosophy, not that she necessarily agrees with it, falls on the preservation end: basically, they like to let shit rot and decay in place.

the sign was not heeded. nobody dies though

7pm - That did end up being a darn fine day. After lunch we finished canoe-hauling the logs. My canoe skill is improving. It was pretty funny watching a couple others try to navigate the canoe in the windy moments, with a big log wrecking havoc. Also: we saw a snowshoe hare!

Around dinner, the crew is telling stories of the weirdest/stupidest shit they've ever done. It's nice to reflect that I haven't done very much that's truly this stupid in my life. Speaking of: apparently, Jean managed to break one of our radios. With only one radio, we won't be able to keep in contact if we split into 2 - so we'll be working all together as a team of 6 for the rest of the hitch.

June 1 - Russell Pond
We hiked lots and cut lots! Did a loop of the Grand Falls and Wassaquoik Stream Trails and back to Russell Pond, a little over 6 miles total. Mostly hot w a lil breeze, then drizzly & cooler for our last mile, which it turned out had already been cleared. Saw lots of white and a few pink lady slippers. The Wassa Stream lean-to had an amazing view.

I got real pissed at the beginning of the day b/c Jo was unsure about what exactly the requirements for corridor clearing are, so he started getting incredibly fuckin picky, and everyone had different ideas and became obnoxious as hell, like usual (including now, back at the cabin making dinner). Seems like we coulda worked this out ahead of

ATV FIGHT. Also, a Great Black Hawk (normally only seen in central america) was confirmed by Maine Audobon, in Biddeford.

(later, at TBF) - Eva is still mad at me, and is scrounging wood for a fire. Me: "Can someone who's not me let her know she can use the firewood pile instead of finding more in the woods? Jo, serious: "No." (Rian told her.) The gate attendant, and later Ranger Bruce told us that Ranger Liz will be bringing a new epi-pen for us tomorrow. Then in the cabin, a note from Ranger Rebekah told us the same thing.

The crew is staying up late, they say, to watch the perseid meteor shower. Not knowing them to be terribly interested in such things, I suspect they want an excuse to staying up late listening to shitty music.

August 13 - Trout Brook Farm
Jo plans to only do a half day Wednesday, leaving Weds afternoon and Thurs morning for cleaning all our equipment and the cabin. We are working jointly with Arianne's team today; Team Leader Dylan is also phoning it in; he's trying to suggest we.... just don't do anything this week at all. Their team found an unknown animal's jawbone on the trail; it's currently in the back of their truck.

The two of them wanted to take a different side road into Wadleigh Brook trail, although Angie and I repeatedly told them we've seen that road is covered in blowdowns. They eventually listened. We'll see how this goes...

10am - Tommy says that in two 9-day hitches on Freezeout, he saw a total of one (1) hiker. Ofc, the fact that these trails needed so much work, may well be contributing to such little use. I saw a big pile of fur while walking with Tommy, and pointed it out to him. "Oh, I've probably seen 5 of those just on this trail." He is a liar. (This sort of strange, senseless lying seems to happen with MCC men on a regular basis). Brett has been BLASTING music, tho he did turn it down when I asked nicely. He has a preferred stick he carries every day for the purpose of clearing ground cover by swinging it side to side. This is not very effective. Meanwhile, I got 4 yellowjacket stings. They fucking hurt at first, but are feeling better now.

Dylan and Jo are grumping at each other, because Dylan doesn't like Jo's high & highly variable standards for what constitutes a corridor section as being "done", and Jo thinks Dylan's team is hella sloppy and lazy (not wrong there). Rian has fallen asleep on the trail after lunch. Earlier, I observed that Jo and Rian have almost no women artists on their music playlists. Jo: "That doesn't bother me. Wait, I have one... no, two." I expounded some more on the topic for the group, including some of my faves, and he grumped and said "I don't care."

We are comparing Rian's new $1 speaker, to Jo's $265 speaker. Jo's is definitely not 265x better. Jo says he is not going to fulfill the "MCC tradition" of team leaders taking their team out to breakfast the morning of the Wreckognition ceremony, because "I'm not made of money."

^ spot tha moosey !

5:30pm – Number of others hikers seen today, a Saturday in August: Zero (0). The register said 2 groups of 2 hiked the loop today, but both started and finished before me.

Moose sighting! Very close, just 20 yards or so. At first I just saw brown furriness in a tree, and yelled "hey there bear! hey there!" Turning the corner, I saw it was a moose head, attached to a moose body, and she was unperturbed by my presence. So I watched for a few minutes from a safer spot as she munched on an ash tree. No kidding, I waved goodbye and said "thank you for letting me watch you, moose" – and the moose waggled one ear at me, then turned and walked away.

7:30pm, TBF – My sunburn is really bad. I deserve it for my legs – really neglected to put much sunscreen there. But on my v-neck, the oodles of sunscreen I used apparently just didn't do any good. I'll be surprised if it doesn't peel later.

Eva was here all day, but gone now. There appear to be fruit pie preparations – dough and a ton of blueberries – in the fridge. She's been really wanting to do that, so yay for her! Meanwhile, I am excited for some evening CALORIC INTAKE. I am clearer than ever about leaving, and also that it has nothing to do with not liking the work or not feeling like I'm capable – so fuck anyone's assumptions about that, it's actually quite the opposite! I did learn some about trail work – but other than that, most of my learning here has been self-directed, and didn't require MCC at all.

August 12 – Patten

Slept great and long (9.5 hours) last night, and dyed my hair pink in the morning. Now in Patten. Mailed letters and called Linden. Local paper top story: MAN ARRESTED AFTER BRINGING CHAINSAW TO

time! At our 1st break I actually cried some. Later, after we actually started tackling our primary task of clearing tree blowdowns, Jo realized we couldn't be so damn picky about the corridor, and so things got better.

[The "corridor" refers to the amount of space on either side of you and above you as you use a trail. A common rule of thumb for some hiking trails is that at minimum, you should be able to stretch your arms out in every direction from the center of the trail and not touch branches. Complicating this is the fact that trees grow, and also that other trail users like horses or snowmobiles may need more space.]

Eva's chainsaw got bound up because Jean & Jo misread the bind and suggested the wrong type of cut. Also damn, the boys like sawing, sawing and more sawing. I figure, why waste gas and create more noise when you don't have to. Twice, I took out the hand saw to cut a tiny (<4") dead log and they were both incredulous that I'd want to do that. But I did it super quick. Yay handsaws!

Back at the 1st break – I was really thinking I wanna quit after this hitch. If this trend continues every morning, I dunno what exactly I'll do. But, I don't wanna go on crying and being miserable every day even if I do feel better later in the day. Uffda. The fact that its so damn hot in our tiny cabin isn't helping (Eva was damn near naked earlier... I'd be too if I was alone). Tomorrow, we do the Northwest Basin trail, likely more hiking than today. Forecast: hi in the low 70s, rain possible overnight. Oh! Of note: I successfully shaved behind the Big Rock this morning. whee. very #gender

June 2 – Russell Pond

7am – Much cooler this a.m. Slow getting going bc Rian and Eva are taking a looooooong time to sharpen the saws. Setting our turnaround time on the NW Basin trail for 1pm.

10am – One saw will not start. We should've done tested it before leaving... lesson learned. So we've had a lot of downtime so far, and only made 1.2 miles, having cached the bad saw. I've been starting to munch on trillium leaves. Mmm!

8pm –We ended up quitting plan A early because our 2nd saw would not start either, lolol. We went back to the cabin, took the 3rd saw (which works well) and cleared the 1 mile Caverly Lookout trail along with Ranger Ian, who took a group photo for us in front of a great view at the lookout.

This evening we played blackjack for lemonade packets. I won one! Also we learned that Jean has mighty trouble counting to 21. Jo did 1-on-1 chats with all of us on the Big Rock, which we called "rock talks." I was pleased about this. Eva shared my bunk for a lil bit and we had a smol snuggle. I was pleased about this as well.

The crew is already making plans for going out for pizza in Patten when we return. Angie apparently got phone service at the lookout earlier. Ranger Ian says sometimes he can get texts on the shore of the pond, but only with Verizon, which doesn't help me.

June 3 – Russell Pond
10am – Break at Wassaquoik Stream crossing. Got going earlier this a.m. and have been continuing on NW Basin in the direction of Davis Pond lean-to. Lots of blowdowns requiring the chainsaws. Now, 3 of us are waiting, eyeing a very pretty stream crossing, while the others clear a freshly downed spruce. On the other side is a pile of rusted tools/artifacts including some old-timey crosscut saws, which Jean is super into.

I found a pileated woodpecker feather! It was very chilly this a.m. in the high 30s, and this trend will continue. Forecast says chance of rain tomorrow pm, then the following day when we hike out, 80% chance of rain with high in the upper 40s. Rian, being from Indonesia, says this is the lowest temps he's ever experienced before.

I took a small tumble on the end of rock hopping across Wassa Stream just south of the pond – not even on the most difficult part. Its been kind of dicey for us getting across that, but do-able. Now I have a big bruise just below my knee and a lil arm soreness.

6:30pm– About 1.5 miles after that last stream crossing, came another much trickier one. The NW Basin trail went from moderate to very difficult. Lots of huge boulders to climb over, and underneath many of them was still snow and ice. For a portion the "trail" itself had up to a foot of water flowing on it. We wondered if a beaver dam broke somewhere (we did see a huge beaver dam earlier), or if the trail just plain needs to be rerouted.

The crossing required fording thru thigh-high rapids in addition to some rock hopping. Angie got a cut on her ankle, and i found the water SO DAMN COLD i cried a bit. We ate lunch on the other side, 2 people went ahead to do a couple more blowdowns and cache tools for tomorrow, while Jean and I scouted for a better crossing spot nearby. I found an upstream crossing that we attempted instead; I thought it would be easier to rock-hop than it was, so I felt bad when it wasn't much better after all.

After returning to the trail, we found 3 guys about to cross. The first hikers we've seen this week! One of them knew MCC's Deidre, so he took our photos to send to her. To our dismay, tho, they were also carrying a big moose antler we'd seen earlier, which we'd purposely left for others to enjoy.

Forecast for tomorrow is rain. We're going to try to do all that again, then forge on to Davis Pond. Rian scanning desperately for an fm station on my mini NOAA weather radio has us talking about use of the radio/listening to music while hiking. I just don't get how one can be "sick of the woods" or find them "boring." What did you think you were signing up for?!?

June 4 – Russell Pond
Got up a little before 5 to pee but alas, have not seen the regular morning moose visitor Ranger Ian told us about. Chilly again – thermometer says 41. Wish I'd brought an extra base layer and a toque.

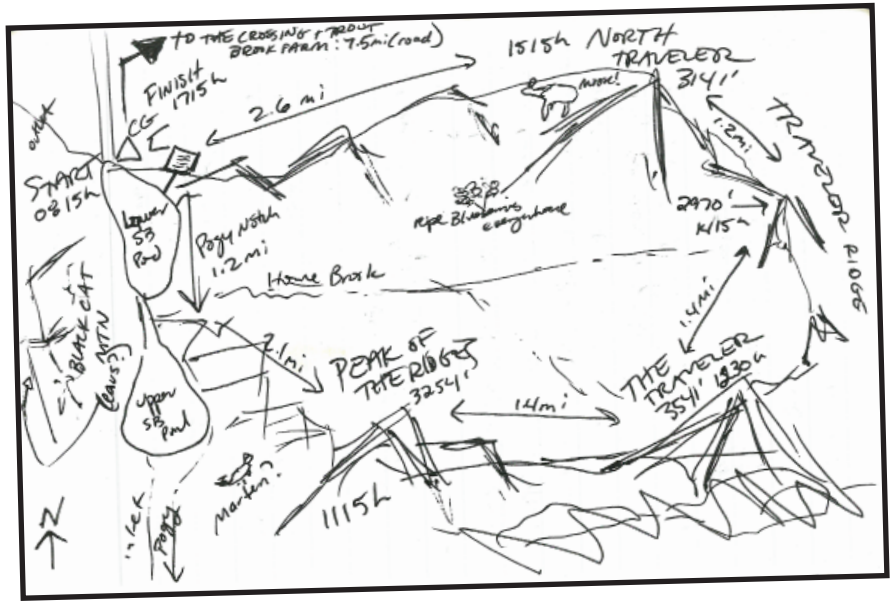
Educational Tasks to complete at the Millinocket Library, he was upset. Later, Eva called from the clinic to say she's not coming at all, so we really didn't even have a pretext of a reason to be here. Rian and the rest of the gang are creating a goofy presentation for the Wreckognition dog/pony show, set to AC/DC ("Thunderstruck" has become our favorite car pump-up song).

Picked up 2 letters at BSP HQ. Reserved a parking spot on 8/20 for Katahdin Stream, where Mars & K will be camping, so the plan regardless of whether we stick together will be to finally climb Katahdin that day. Woo!

6:30pm: Good afternoon back at TBF. Put a new tire/tube on bike. Made beet greens from "Drew's Patch" on the way to Shin Pond – yum! – and fish from the grocery store. I'm thinking about (i.e., crushin on) Mars more than might be healthy.

August 11 – The Traveler
12:40 – I'm on top of The Traveler Mountain! It's like nowhere I've ever been. Can see miles and miles in every direction. Brought up my geologic map from the book so I know exactly what I'm looking at. Tons of blueberries, but I've been refraining from picking lots, in order to make sure I summit before my 130 turnaround time. Now to complete the loop down North Traveler – it'll be 10.2 miles total. (Did I say I biked to South Branch from TBF this morning? Winning).

This morning I saw a marten scamping across the trail. The summit here, and also on Peak of the Ridges, has lots of flies but also a very cool breeze. It's the perfect day – sunny, a few clouds, 70s (60s up here).



Jo showed us the detailed agenda/demands of us for the Wreckognition ceremony - it sounds like they're gonna be real fuckin pushy and there is much "mandatory fun" to be had. I'm not letting anyone know about my real plans, which feels a lil hard but with the speed of gossip, is the best choice. Also, they want us to travel to Augusta for more Mandatory Bureaucrap and equipment return on Friday afternoon, so I'll see if I can reserve a campsite nearby for that night, as Mars was only able to get Thursday night at Peaks-Kenny, when I intend to tell my team I'm going to be picking up Mars' partner K from the airport, in order to go fuck myself off.

Saw a very large black fuzzy caterpillar, and an incredibly pretty grouse feather. The branches of fir trees will grow into the ground, burrow, and come back up further along, and I think this is very cool. Eva is "creeped out" by the bedroom, so the comfy bed is mine again. No rain today, but likely overnight, and a 50% chance tomorrow.

March 9 - Trout Brook Farm
Rian is using the brightly colored gloves Richard left here, and has declared himself the Orange Power Ranger. I've learned something for next time I'm on a crew: go veggie. Was grossed out by Eva & Jo's hotdogs this morning... the quantity and quality of meat eaten here thus far has been grossing me out. Jo says, and I quote, "I know they're awful and factory farming is awful, but I just don't care."

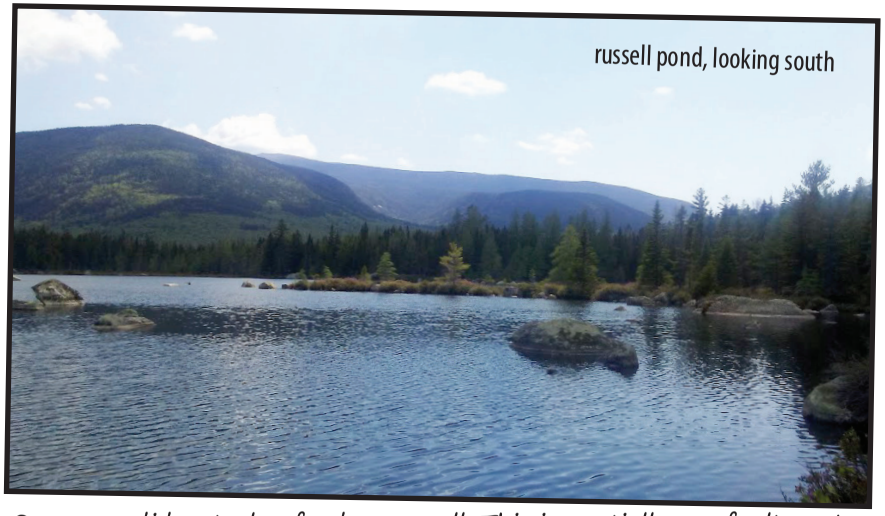
4:30pm: Arianne's team has invaded our cabin, ostensibly to try and figure out together what they should do for the rest of the hitch.

Tommy: "Corridoring is sooooo boring!"
Eva: "How do you like, not kill yourself?"
Me: "You could go change that fucked sign on Black Cat Mountain?"
Jo: "Nah, don't do that."
Everyone started planning to combine our two teams for work tomorrow.... after which I reminded them that we are off Fri/Sat/Sun.

Tommy confirms - as Mars shared with me and Jo did not believe - that Team Leader Dylan flipped their trailer on I-95 a few weekends ago. Also, apparently Will did in fact quit for a while, but then made a comeback. This big group in a small cabin is leading to some serious trail madness! Jass: "I didn't bathe for like, 9 days!" Yes, that is a thing when you're bush camping 9 days at a time :D

We've been finishing real early. Jo said, sarcastically, how happy he was at how hard everyone has worked this week.

August 10 - Millinocket Library
Eva got upset with me this morning for the 2nd time in as many days; about what exactly I'm not sure - she just keeps repeating that I'm acting like a dick. She says she doesn't want to talk to or even be in the same room as me (which may be a problem this weekend...) We're doing Bureaucracy/"Education" day today; on our way out of the park, Eva recalled she has a follow-up appointment at the clinic. Jo had forgotten, and since Eva is the only one with Bureaucratic

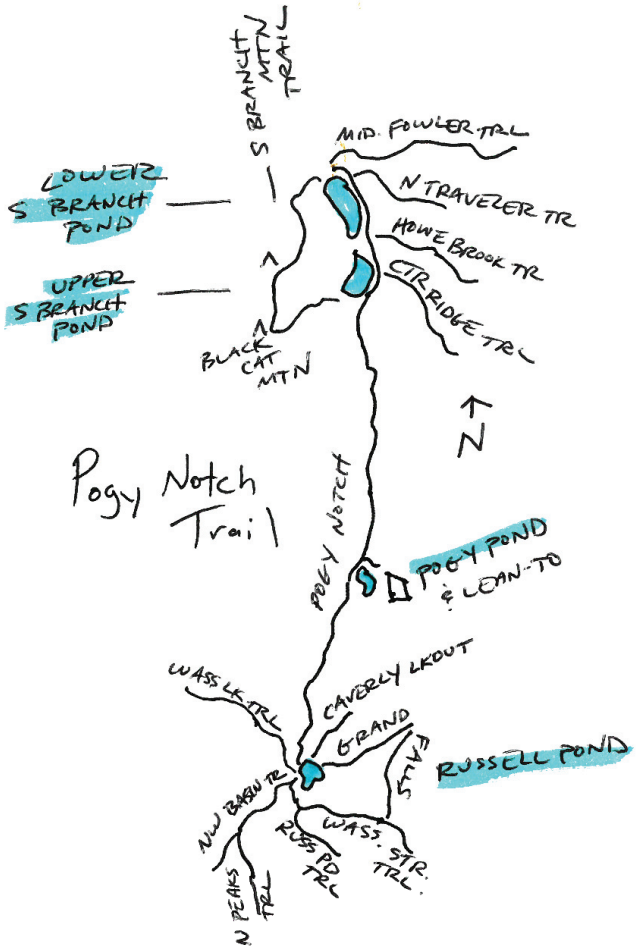


Our crew did not plan food very well. This is partially my fault, as I underestimated others' appetites. But since I brought my own snacks, I should have just enough for the next 2 days in that department. Last night Eva cooked the last of the ground beef with veggies and tomato sauce. Tonite I will do my couscous curry and throw in the hodgepodge of what little is left over. For taking so much food, we sure flew through it. Ofc a lot of it was bulky and not at all ideal for backpacking (ground beef???).

I am worried about crossing the river to our cache if it's raining/slick, as forecast. Hard to believe that nobody informed us - you know, THE TRAIL CREW - about such trail conditions or obstacles prior to us heading out.

7pm - well... that was a DAY. Got to the big crossing and this time we used a line of rope to assist our fording, which made it much easier and faster. After that tho, the trail was very uphill to very very uphill; another section with stream going down the trail, and lots of climbing. The corridor was VERY tight and we did lotsa branch-lopping. Eventually we went up to Lake Cowles, which was drop-dead gorgeous. Possibly the most beautiful lake I've ever seen. We could see across the basin to above treeline, and were 0.3 mi from Davis Pond Lean-to. It'd been spitting and sprinkling some, but just as we passed the lake the clouds opened up more and we decided to turn back. Sleet and rain and freezing rain - it got wild. And by the time we got back to the crossing there were indisputable snowflakes added to the mix, with the wind picking up. We used the rope again - Rian fell and got his bottom half soaked, but held on. Dried him out on the other size - he was wearing Jo's rain pants because he dropped his pants in the river the first time - and I lent him my dry(ish) liner socks. The whole thing was pretty damn intense - seeing Rian fall gave me extra adrenaline to get across quickly and help him. I was worried about potential hypothermia, but while his pack got soaked, his core was thankfully OK. Now that we're back at the cabin and have the wood stove on, and my couscous curry was a big hit, we're all in good spirits. But all day we were pissed at Baxter & MCC for getting us

on such a ridic trail without proper planning. Ranger Ian had only told us it would be "wet". That's different than literally a foot of running water on the trail, pal. Oh, and we're still relying on a map (that I had to buy) that's not really sufficient for true navigation. Photocopy and laminate some goddamn topo maps for us, y'all! All that said, it was still fun...



Tomorrow we hike out via Pogy Notch again, with some blowdown clearing for part of the way. Chances we'll see snowflakes again? I say: moderately high.

I really have to shave again in the morning. Fuckin Jean called me "he" before correcting himself... if only it weren't so cold outside...

June 5 - Russell Pond to Trout Brook Farm
12pm - lunch, approx 1.5 mi N of Pogy Pond. Last day of the 1st hitch! We got going around 745 - later than hoped, but just think if Jo and I hadn't tried to hurry everyone the fuck up. Several of us are dragging, but making the pace so far. We left the first 3.4 mi to Pogy Pond to clear later - but only counted 6 blowdowns that whole stretch. To compare - we've cleared about 10 so far going north and left a couple bigger ones for later too. Chilly and cloudy, but warmer than expected so far and only a sprinkle of rain. We are all soooo looking forward to pizza.

June 6 - Trout Brook Farm
Well, yesterday sure was another Day! Actually it wasn't so bad. We stopped after clearing 22 blowdowns. On the rest of the trail I counted 24 more for later. The approximately 2 miles from the

bopping about (kinda creepy, actually) - all the constellations, and plenty of light to walk around just from the stars.

wild bluebs

Picked up Remedios and read a few pages, including about Catalina Erauso, the genderfluid conquistador, and also about ginger. "Ginger is ferocity and stubbornness. Ginger is aggressive and sharp. Ginger is the friend who drags you out of bed and makes you get up and face the morning. Ginger loosens your cramps against the difficult. ... Ginger is the one at the meeting who cuts through all the pointless arguments to say the short sharp thing that brings us back to purpose. Ginger clears fog from the brain. Tough ginger may burn your throat, but its intention is never to be harsh. It's just that ginger knows exactly what is needed and can't help acting on everything it knows. Cultivate ginger! Keep it in stock. Add it to everything."

August 7 - Trout Brook Farm
Angie and I corridoring where we left off yesterday. Drizzle keeping the temp down. The last few days on Wadleigh Brook Trail, we've seen a grand total of zero (0) hikers. After yesterday's incident, Jo wants to do check-ins on the radio every 2 hours... but since 1000, he either isn't, or is out of range.

Angie tells me that at Marden's, she and Rian got Jo a toilet golf game and a toilet basketball game as a gift. What we're doing today feels a lot like busywork, and so I'm taking an extra long lunch break, re-reading Linden's notes to me.... and I miss them so fuckin much, feelin kinda wimpy but damn I miss my babe.

8pm - Made a successful dinn of corn on the cob, salad and NEW POTATOES with all the fixins. Earlier, I had an anxious moment almost getting lost, having gone to look for water but not finding the brook as close by as I thought, then got turned around on my way back. It probably only took me 10-15 minutes to re-find the trail, but that was enough to teach me a stern lesson in not wandering off without my gear (especially compass). When it's cloudy and without landmarks in sight... don't fuckin do that!!!

August 8 - Trout Brook Farm
We all started today doing the section on Frost Pond with a huge hanging widowmaker a few minutes hike in. Jo wanted to try and pull it down with the rope, but after many tries, we gave up and opted instead to reroute the trail for 100ft or so around the widowmaker and the pile of blowdown underneath it.... which is exactly what Richard, Angie and I had suggested when we traversed this segment the first time.

~~**roots**~~ and that you have to also pull those up if you don't want the plant or tree to grow back. Jo has had headphones in and Eva has been listening to a podcast. I moved further down the trail to work alone. Feeling thankful I got time with Mars so I'm not second guessing my attitude as much. Time for more gardening and making little discoveries, I guess.

Was supposed to be 95 according to the NOAA forecast this morning... it's hot but not that hot, with an occasional sprinkle and a nice breeze.

7:30pm: Well, so much for gardening... we ended up with more than enough excitement for one day. Just after lunch, Eva got stung on the hand by some wasps and had a nasty anaphylactic reaction. Jo called me to come back from up trail, with some urgency in his voice, and I did just before he injected her with epinephrine from our med kit - she looked in really bad shape: very flushed and itchy skin, trouble breathing and rapid pulse. I ran to soak her shirt in the brook, and helped cool her down and keep her calm. As the epipen started to take hold, she felt ok enough to hike out slowly, so we cached her bag and all the tools, and went out to the Frost Pond trailhead (maybe 1.2 mi), then walked down the Lynx Road (1.5 mi?) after leaving a note for Angie and Rian to find - they'd taken the car to Blunder Bog. We couldn't reach Ranger Jeff on the radio until we were almost to the Tote Road, where he picked us up and drove us back to TBF Cabin, then to the parking area outside the north gate where we got in Jo's car. Then Area Ranger Russ zoomed up.. and he has wee-woo lights on his windshield. He speedily escorted us all the way into the clinic in Patten... at one point when I looked over we were hitting 95mph (it's a 50mph road).

Thankfully the lil clinic was able to handle it - I was worried a trip to Millinocket Hospital was potentially in order. On the drive, Eva's original symptoms started to come back, and we didn't have a 2nd epipen. I learned about 20% of cases have a 2nd (biphasic) reaction, and it can be anywhere from 1-72 hours later. Thankfully we were not far from the clinic when Eva's happened, and she seems to be OK now. After 90 minutes at the clinic she got an Rx and we headed back. I think we handled it very well. Woulda been less stressful if we had 2 epipens though... and maybe a better quality radio than the shitty $40 ones we've been issued....

I was acutely aware at the clinic that I haven't shaved in a few days and probably looked a lot like a boy. Whatever 4 ever. Glad my team (and Jeff & Russ, apparently) are cool. We learned from an older guy in the lobby that the venison up here doesn't taste as good, because the deer don't eat acorns (no oak trees).

1:50am - Couldn't stay asleep... thinking about the day, and potential things to say at the upcoming Wreckognition Day. I'm on the futon so Eva can have the comfort of the single room. Went outside for a lil stargazing and it's so clear - no moon - I could make out the milkyway as a long stripe of billions-year-old light going SW to NE across the sky. Might be the most stars I've ever seen. Satellites

southern end of South Branch Pond back to South Branch CG - the section we bypassed via boat on the way in - has a very steep climb that's gonna suck with lotsa gear. But we have at least 2 more tries to knock it all out.

Jean, Angie and Rian went quite a ways ahead of the rest of us, which pissed us off because they were out of voice and visual range and also had both of the med kits our group has been carrying - while Jo, Eva and I were stuck carrying the very awkward/heavy gas can and trash bucket (the others had the chainsaws, but since they can go in a pack instead of in hand, they're not so bad imo). Jo took Jean aside and ripped into him, just like he did after the 1st day fiasco (which I only found out later). The funny thing is, Jean was dragging all morning, had a horrible attitude and said he "hated" this place.

I don't get what in the world led to him getting the "assistant team leader" designation [not that it really comes with responsibilities?], except that he's done conservation crew work one season prior and is fairly knowledgeable with the saws. That said, also yesterday I had to refuse to start my saw until he agreed to put his helmet on, while standing just a few feet away from me ready to swamp (the term for clearing brush from sawing). I don't care if the safety stuff seems excessive at times - at Russell we are in strictly self-evac territory if anyone gets hurt, there is nowhere for a helicopter to land. In so many ways he just seems the opposite of everything a leader should be.

Got back to the crew car around 5pm. Made the 45 minute drive to Patten and found Debbie's Pizza & Deli, where we gorged ourselves on food and weirded out the locals bigtime. The server (Debbie?? not sure) excitedly told the two back of house ladies where all of us were from - MN, Wisconsin, MI, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Australia - and the two tables of locals watched with great interest. The crew seemed to forget how to behave in public and it was pretty embarrassing. I tipped a ton b/c Debbie was really nice to us. They have a huge selection and are open 4am-9pm 7 days a week, so I'll def be back.

Predictably, no phone service in Patten, but I did get on wifi briefly at the gas station, enough to talk to Linden for 5 minutes while we filled up and the others bought more gastrointestinal goodies.

Jo let me have the big solo bedroom overnight, so I fell asleep soon after we got back to the cabin, thereby avoiding more of the loud and obnoxious conversation that started in the car... not to mention Rian playing loud cartoons on his laptop ??? Now it's 7am and, Jean, playing your guitar at this hour is a fuckin idea.

4pm - Millinocket (Wilderness Edge campground)
Drove down here to Baxter HQ with Jo, and then we both talked a while with Rangers Liz and Rebecca about the last and next hitch. Rebecca's gonna join us on the hike in next Monday, sounds like. The wifi is crappy at the office here, but outside the grocery store I got a connection and sent out a message to Linden and Natalie back home, crossed some things to look up off my list, then bought some personal

groceries/snax/supplies. Then decided to come to this commercial campground to relax for the rest of the day. I don't wanna make a habit of $18/night (vs. free at state parks, except Baxter, for MCCers), but it should be okay once in awhile.

Jean is going to try to make it to Portland and back with no car of his own... Jo is obviously worried he won't be back in time (I kinda hope he's not, tbh). We're gonna meet at the grocery store in Patten at 4pm Sunday for shopping.

7pm - I got a postcard from a friend back home! Woohoo! There's a pileated banging away two sites over. I think I want a pileated tattoo. I should ask Linden to draw it for me. Meant to cocoa butter my feet but forgot to grab it after eating and finishing chores outside the tent. waaaah. Maybe next time I have to pee. Rn I'm maxxin and relaxxin.

June 7 - Trout Brook Farm
Morning - I just remembered whilst cozy in "bed" that yesterday, Jean said the dude from training with the confederate flag hat (I don't even remember his name - he gave up and left after 2 days) had some nasty shit to say about me one night, but that he and some others defended me. I wanted to ask for more details since I have morbid curiosity like that, but did not. I'd like to think that his repulsion with me contributed to him quitting :-)

Our team's official motto, thanks to Rian saying it a lot, is GET OFF MY NUTS. Except the first time he said it, we all thought he said "get ON my nuts". Even more awkward things have been said thus far, so it was not a big deal, but much belly-laughing ensued.

11am - made it to the Millinocket Library, and apparently the whole town is in a power outage, so not much to accomplish here at the moment (internet was the main goal). Blah!

6pm - Seboeis Public Reserve Land Unit - Endless Lake Outlet campsite. I found me a free campsite! One of three along this lil road off Hwy 11 SW of town. I think I'll try to make this my home for the next couple nights. It's first come first serve here and there's lots of former logging roads around to potentially explore too.

Around Noon, I messaged Mars on Skype and found out they're staying at the Appalachian Trail Hostel in Millinocket, so we met up, had black bean burgs at the AT Cafe and walked around town. It was great to spend a lil time with them. Prior to that I met Team Leader Joel by chance at the library - the power came back on, so I used a computer to take care of some tasks. Mars and I complained about our crews... seems like we are facing similar challenges, Mars especially with a certain 18-year-old toddler named Max. I learned that Will - now with a reputation for drunken shenanigans and theft as well - was talking shit about me, and I am happy to be on his shit list! We of course hope he gets fired, and both said we would've quit if we'd been put together with him. He's like Jean PLUS all the entitlement that comes from being a privileged white bro who's never had to do any introspection or take any responsibility for his own actions.

possibilities, but it will aid my sanity. I do want to stick to my original plan to stay. But I think my heavy heart is also telling me what I ought to do.

Our campsite neighbors 2 sites over have a cat. His name is Sam. He likes leaving gifts of dead rodents.

Angie & Rian are here at Aroostook too. I told them to come by our site for apple fritters, but the fritters are in the locked car, and Mars is asleep with the keys. They showed me some texts from Eva, who saw many baby cows on her time away, and was VERY WRONG about the degree to which turkeys like to be petted (zero).

9pm - Back at Trout Brook Farm. Mars is very impressed with the swankiness of our cabin. We mashed "NEW POTATOES" from the Amish stand for dinner, then hiked Trout Brook Mtn and had a splendid time. We picked so many blueberries. Pancakes are in order for the morning. Very foggy and misty - excellent landscapes from the top of the mountain into the sunset and towards the Travelers. We did the final half mile back in the dark.

August 5 - Trout Brook Farm
Mars & I hiked South Branch Falls and lingered for the morning around the falls & brook - v cool rock formations and pools, and great rock picking. Mars says they like me! I feel like a giddy teenager. We actually slept in the same bed last night (in the room), but were not terribly touchy. A bit of that this morning. They're going to reserve a site at Peaks-Kenny state park for next time, so I'll see them then and we'll decide whether we want to go to the planned MCC Rec(Wreck)ognition ceremony near Skowhegan.

At the South Branch parking area, we returned to find a "courtesy ticket" (no fine) from some jerk ranger on Mars' car. We were blocking nothing and no one! We hypothesized that the ranger saw the MCC sticker and wanted to mess with up. We've been hearing some rangers are not fond of MCC. The signature was someone other than Jeff, the South Branch ranger who helped ferry us by boat in late May.

After talking with Mars about it, I feel like grilling Jo on why we don't do actual educational activities during our bureaucracy-mandated "Education Hours". Hell, let's even do like, some Plant ID! Not that Mars's team does.

August 6 - Trout Brook Farm
Jo, Eva and I went up the WB trail, to do the big spruce we left some weeks ago. Rather than cutting the birch it was leaning on, Jo cut it down slowly bit by bit until we could do no more, and part is still stuck in the birch anyway, so we're leaving it.

MCC Rebekah has told Jo she wants a 4-foot-wide corridor, and he has interpreted this as having us basically getting on our knees and weeding every little sapling. Excessive for a trail this infrequently used, imo. Plus my crew seems to not understand the concept of

upper and lower south branch ponds, seen looking west from Traveler Mountain

Got an email back from MCC Lindsay, basically saying that I should learn to get along with people. I replied saying that's a crap take, and got a sort of apologetic note back. But, well … …

August 4 – Aroostook State Park
7am – Stayed up late talking around the fire with Mars, bed at midnight or so – they lent me an extra pad and comfy blanket so I slept wonderfully, but only until 4:30am. Got up to pee, then felt motivated to document in list form all the crap about Jean and Will, then could not get back to sleep.

My trailing "But well…" last night was going to say: But, well, I'm very strongly leaning towards just calling it quits after summer session is over. After listening to Mars' good sense – and about how horrible their team has been in so many ways – I don't know that it's worth it. Nobody from MCC has expressed how well I've done these past 3 months; clearly they don't want me that bad. There's lots of pros to heading back to MN.

Mars got a group text from their team, saying they're getting 2 more members for their last hitch. Mars replied "I quit," and hilarity has ensued, as everyone takes them so seriously. There was also this exchange been Mars's crewmates Max (an entitled 18-yo who wants to be a cop) and Mitch:

Mitch: Can we haze them?
Max: People have died from hazing you know. I have 911 on speed dial.
Team Leader Berlin: Hazing allowed.
Mitch: People have died from the cops, you know.

There's lots I'd still love to learn about here in Maine… but it doesn't have to happen with MCC. Leaving does not preclude any future

Mars and I are going to meet up for breakfast at the cafe at 8 on Saturday, and I'm already looking forward to it. Been wearing my red polka dot glasses and people seem to dig em. I'm tired now. Might be another night of set up tent, make dinner, eat, fall asleep. I complain about my group but, if not for being part of a group with a purpose, I'd never have pushed myself so hard to see all the cool things we did last week.

June 8 – Seboeis Campsite
Not much beats a cozy tent listening to the sounds of nature. Tho I could stand to be more cozy right now… I purposely left my sleeping back at Russell Pond, so I've been piling on the blankets. Time for a fudge poptart.

11am – turning out to be a beautiful sunny day after some a.m. rain. I started a small fire – very smoky – which at least keeps the mosquitoes away. Wrote another card. Swallowtail butterfly just butter-flew by! Explored the area – this would be a nice lil bikepacking trip from Millinocket. I might ask Linden to make and send me some more of these dehydrated beans I brought. They are DAMN fine.

Evening – Fixed pack webbing, put loops on chainsaw gloves for easier carrying, sewed the patch Jac gave me (a lil boat with a subtle hammer/sickle flag) onto my carhartt flannel. Organized food for next hitch. Back is sore but the skeeters have been at bay, between the smoke and the breeze. And I haven't been bothered by anybody.

I hope Mars will want to camp with me tomorrow. This has been a good day but I think I am ready to be around people again. Oh! Have I mentioned that just before I left Millinocket yesterday, I got an email from the gender surgery clinic in California asking to call about my place on the cancellation list"! Do they want to offer me an early date? Of course I will say not until after November, but it also got me questioning how much I really want to go ahead with the surgery. Oh, the complex feels. (And oh, the complex insurance….)

June 9 – Millinocket
At the AT Cafe anxiously awaiting Mars. Replied to the GRS Clinic. Got a message from Linden – they're camping this weekend back home – and also Poa, who says they'll be free during an off-hitch in July so I might get to visit again! Mars eventually showed up with Joel and Arianne in tow and we had a tasty brekkie. The server was rather grouchy, and sir-ma'amed one of us, tho I'm not totally sure

which, lol. We're too gender-indeterminate, Joel's too scruffy, and Arianne hangs out with us so is probably bad news too. Afterward we hit up a lil art gallery, and discussed with the artist how apparently tourism is only now becoming an important economic sector up here and lots of folks are only going along with it "kicking and screaming". Nestle is buying up lots of water rights from small towns here, too.

I'm reading a smidgen of a book about colonial Acadia - a coastal Maine settlement of "ungovernable" people who cared not for french nor english rules. The French were more tolerant of local indigenous peoples - not to excuse their own settler colonialism, but an interesting thought experiment of what might've happened if they been the dominant colonizers of turtle island instead.

8pm - Ended up in a site at Wilderness Edge next to Mars, Arianne and Joel, who have built a fire and welcomed me to sit next to it and occasionally mutter words. I conditioned my boots and organized some things better for the next hitch. I also found the hiking pants I'd been looking for and assumed I'd left at home! Amazing how there is still room for items to get lost in this lil car.

June 10 - Whetstone Falls Day Use Area, just east of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument *[the monument is a recently federally protected large chunk of land, as yet almost entirely undeveloped, to the east of Baxter.]*

It sure takes a while to drive places up here... been going about an hour and I'm not even in the monument proper yet. There is not much signage for it, being less than 2 years old, but at the turnoff there's a big "NO NATIONAL PARK" sign in some crank's yard to guide the way, and more such signs around the logging roads here saying "this land owner says national park no". These old fogies. Do they care enough about the land to clean up this rest area? Seems like

the view of katahdin facing west, as annotated at the KWW national monument overlook

there's a trail in here somewhere...

nice to do later? Also it's 8pm?? Why climbing? (aaaaand, now my brain is going down a rabbit hole. he mentioned he had a wife, but if i wasn't a suspicious trans girl, and sex with him was more realistic, would I be interested? i'm not sure.....)

August 3 - Millinocket Library
Contrary to rumor, apparently Will did not actually quit his team. I got an email putting him on an 8-person team with me for a project at Merryspring Nature Center in Camden, for the Mon-Thurs between summer and fall sessions. We'll see if they agree to switch this... I'd say, "we'll see who will win," but either way I know I will win because I just am not going to trust being around him for that long, no matter what they say, and that's that.

The internet tells me the closest actual bike shop is in Presque Isle, but the Lincoln Wal-mart has presta tubes. Fuck you anyway, Mall-wart.

Jo confirmed he wants to stick around and do corridor work for the final 2 weeks. I wish he'd been more willing to push a little and finish earlier so we could get another more interesting assignment, like the previously teased North Brother Mtn. He says he wants to be a team leader in Utah next year. I think I'm learning that the various U.S. state conservation corps are more about the corps (work, and an excuse for some people to travel around to different parts of the country) than the conservation (values).

Evening - I am with Mars, at Aroostook! We met at the library, then I left the crew car at BSP HQ and we took Mars's car here. Tomorrow we'll go back and maybe spend the night at TBF. They also have Monday and Tuesday off, and then one final 9-day hitch after. I'm so grateful to spend time with them, and to not be alone in thinking that MCC is mostly full of shit. Hearing their perspective is so validating.

Everyone has earbuds engaged at high frequency lately, which makes it difficult to converse. Hopefully they'll at least continue pretending to kinda like me for another week, even if they're interested in talking less?

Someone in a TBF campsite is loudly singing opera, and not at all badly. Gonna do some prep for my dinner day tomorrow - then bed.

August 1 - Trout Brook Farm
5p - Turns out the Baxter Youth Conservation Corps are paid, so it wasn't exactly a "volunteer" deal, but we finished our day with them early and got back to TBF at 330. Now, my dinner is ready and everyone else is asleep. I've made really enough food for 6, too. I feel like it's a special occasion, or maybe a lil like I threw a party and nobody came. But I'm hungry so I'm eating now :)

(Not long after I wrote that, they all woke up and enjoyed my tofu, beets & misc veggies in coconut curry sauce.) Before 10am, my anxiety about today was really getting to me, to the point of crying a bit. But then the day actually went really great. There were twelve 16-to-18-year-olds total; only 2 of them young women - The group I led w/ Rian ended up being entirely boys. There was some dumb teenage boy shit, but nothing too bad, no gendery related problems for me, and they were all fun to talk to and work with. A kid from Kentucky first pegged my accent as a southerner (I'm decidedly not, but my accent is so hard to place even I don't have a good answer about it!), and he talked about living off grid with his fam. Like teenage boys do, he aggravated some hornets and got stung. There was also a separate wasp incident... what is it with boys and stinging insects??? But no serious harm done.

They also all loved the cookies and cream popcorn I brought (yep - Marden's). Also: they totally had better tools than us! And we found out they make more money than us!!!!

It does seem like Jo intends for us to spend the rest of our time in Baxter corridoring :(oh well.

August 2 - Trout Brook Farm
Had a hard time getting up. Did the thing late into the night where I replay events in my mind after leading/facilitating something. Rian says he had a dream in which I told Angie she "has an MMA fighter voice". I left my tent in the same place too long and killed off some grass :(I hope Ranger Marshall doesn't notice/care too much.

(later) Angie, Rian and I did WB southbound. We sawed a lot and did not finish, spying another big blowdown clusterfuck ahead. Rian's pants, alas, totally disintegrated.

Nobody has eaten the watermelon. I guess we're just not into it. A good table centerpiece, though. Ranger Marshall knocked and gave me a soda AND a chaga mushroom! He says there are lots by the Frost Lake trail. Later, he asked if I wanted to go for a climb with him. I graciously declined. Is he flirting with me? Should I think of something

not. We need some pro public land support. The Penobscot River is gorgeous - lots of riffles - lots of swallowtails, and the bugs aren't bad except for some gnats.

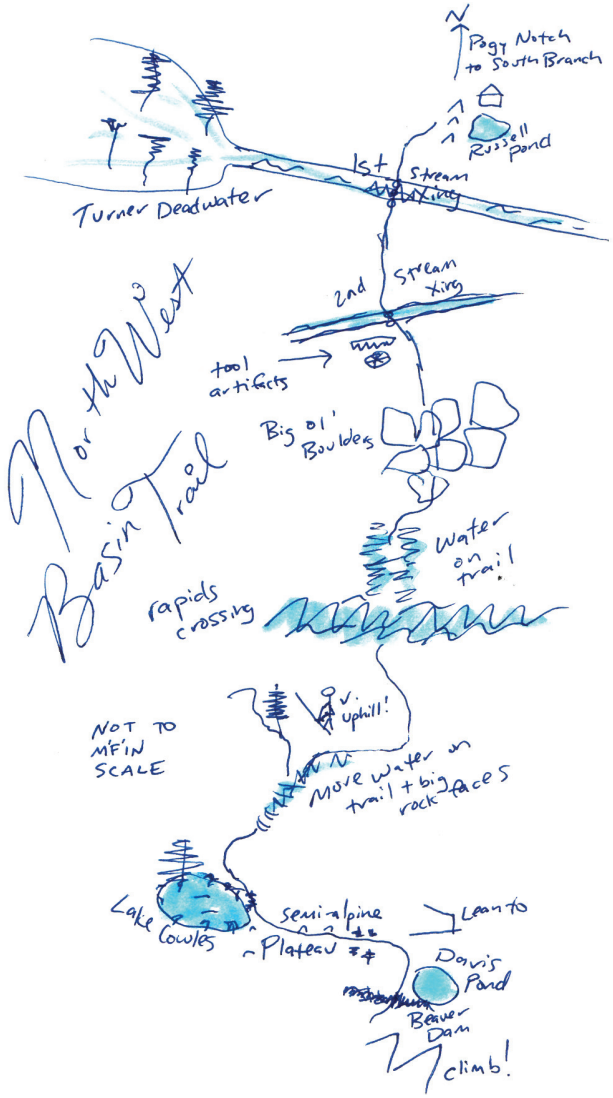
4:30 - Patten - Here I sit waiting for my team for food shopping. On the loop road at the national monument, a mama bear ran across the road just 50 feet in front of me! Then, following behind but not crossing, her two teeny cubs! I watched as they both peered from behind the understory for just a minute but then drove on as I didn't want to be between mom and kiddo. So cool. Also saw another snowshoe hare. I saw a grand total of two (2) other vehicles on the entire 16 mile loop. Amazing view of Katahdin, with a wood-carved map of all the peaks at the overlook. Now I'm considering the odds everyone will show up here...

9:45 - Trout Brook Farm - All has worked out OK. Located the rest of the crew at the laundromat (I did laundry at the campground). We were supposed to shop at 5... people were not ready... by the time we departed for Baxter, it was 6:50. The bill was $35/person, but only b/c Jo and I vetoed several things and also blocked people's personal purchases from being sneaked onto the group's bill. Bless the cashier for dealing with us. Now folks are chopping veggies and prepping dinner... which is great, but also its almost 10pm and I wanna fuckin sleep. Tryna be calm. On the way in, Angie said she wanted to see a moose. Literally in less than a minute, one appeared along the road!

June 11 - Trout Brook Farm to Russell Pond
1st day of the second hitch. Eva got up at 3:30 to make tea and woke me up, as I'd been sleeping in the kitchen to get away from the heat and stink of the communal room upstairs. When I couldn't get back to bed by 4:15, I decided to go outside, and found a small moose cow to watch in the field by the cabin. Made muffins and toasted squash seeds, and prepped a lunch of fiddleheads, beans and tempeh before anyone else was even up. Now it's a lil after 8 and we're again shuttling by boat down to Pogy Notch. My pack is so fuckin heavy because of all the food we're taking.

June 12 - Russell Pond
So after hiking lots and cutting things yesterday I was pretty pooped. At the cabin, Eva laid down in my bunk again and we snuggled all evening, which I was quite happy about, and I decided I just didn't wanna do anything til morning. Rian made stirfry. After a coupla others fell asleep, Jean told stories about various asshole things he's done, and as usual Eva egged him on, which I woulda been pissed about were she not so warm and comfy. Jean said a really hateful thing in referring to another trans person, and I eventually convinced him to leave and go to bed in his toolshed spot.

Then a lil bit after falling asleep (I think whilst spooning Eva), I had a nasty scare. I suddenly had real bad cramps, felt short of breath, and nauseous. Thought I was gonna retch and/or have diarrhea for sure so I crawled outside, and ended up collapsing just a few feet outside the cabin. My bodily fluids stayed contained but it took me a few minutes to recover. Eva sat with me on the ground and didn't know what to



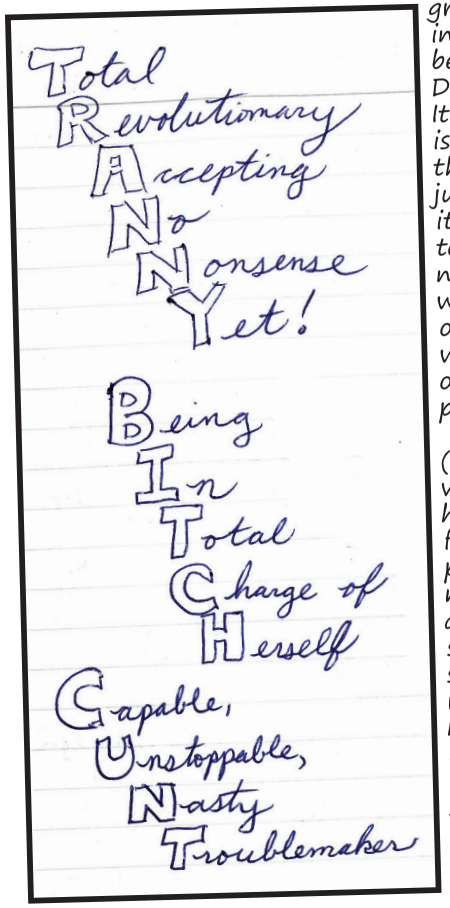
do (me neither, really), but I'm glad she was there. I had her bring me my sleeping bag for warmth and water to sip. That made me feel better enough to go back in, where I had a small snack and felt good enough to properly go to bed, in a comfy nest where I could stretch my legs (i.e., with Eva on her own bunk). Scary and exhausting. I wish I could sleep in til noon.

7pm – Russell Pond Trail today, clearing lotsa blowdowns with Jo and Eva while the others leapfrogged us. We finished the whole thing. Rian told us about a time going to get his nails done and getting 2 pink and 1 brown. The nail tech didn't get it. We've all decided to do nails on the next hitch... though not those colors...

June 13 – Russell Pond

Doing the North Peaks Trail today – Jo, Rian and I. Ready to climb! Come to think of it, this might be the highest peak I've ever been to. I'm a midwest flatland queerdo, ok? We're not actually going all the way up tho. Treeline is at 4182 and Hamlin Peak itself is 4756ft. If I am reading the topo correctly, I think our cabin is at about 1600.

3:30 – Back early. Trail started gradually up... then steeper, but mostly dirt and not the ridiculous rock faces NW Basin had – so far. Another wide-ish rocky stream crossing 0.2 miles after the NW Basin trail split, rock hoppable. We worked up to about 3000ft (according to my newly installed GPS app) where I worked a big-ass spruce



ground, and there wasn't an extra in the kit as there is supposed to be :(So then we did corridoring. Doing this with Jo is very odd. It's so subjective about how much is "enough", but bc he tells more than he suggests, it's basically just following his directions. Since it IS so subjective, I don't mind terribly, and enjoy the time not having to think as much as with chainsawing, which is more of a puzzle to solve. But I do wonder if he's trying to drag out our remaining work as long as possible :/

(Later) MCC Deidre came to visit! It was great to talk with her – and her mom too, along for the ride, who seemed pretty rad (D apologized about mom misgendering me, but it didn't seem hostile). D gave us... shockingly... more surveys. But sadly, it seemed the primary reason for her visit was that Eva has been suspended for a week, due to her habit of being so late every Sunday. I don't think she's been here at the appointed group meetup/grocery shopping time for at least 4 weeks, so this is fair, but I'm sad she won't be here, despite it all. D drove her out to her car. I gave her a big hug and said I'd miss her. She said she might go to Aroostook, or New Brunswick. Now we are 4.

D took a photo of all of us in suspenders, Jo in his pair and Rian lending out 3 of his 4. Also, D has a tattoo of the Husqvarna logo....?

July 31 – Trout Brook Farm

Angie and I did corridor on Wadleigh. Of note: much more jewelweed at the beaver dam -- an honest-to-goodness RHUBARB plant! just one -- a v cute snek tryna look ferocious at us from her hole -- loon calling very close by -- yesterday, we also saw the moose who has become a semi-regular at a certain spot on Wadleigh Brook Road.

Tomorrow, we are being joined by the Baxter Youth Conservation Corps, whom we know nothing about, except that spending a day with them will apparently fulfill the bureaucratic "volunteer event" requirement from americraps.

Pond Village, the lil side-of-the-road general store/trading post halfway between Patten and the north gate. Did laundry, had a sammie, and bought the Guide to the Geology of Baxter State Park.

So long story short from last night. Over dinner, Richard blew up at me. He called me a rat and a snitch (and, to Rian, a bitch [about 47 times] and a "he or she or whatever"). He didn't like that I'd mentioned to Jo that I didn't like him smoking so close to me the other day (thanks a lot, Jo, for passing that on so tactfully). He thought I should bring it up directly... which I would've, except that when Jo himself brought it up directly, Richard cussed him out about it later! I mentioned the dynamics of an older man in a group with two younger women, and he flipped out. But get this - later, I heard him say to Rian that he's spent 16 years in prison, then 5 in a group home.... nearly his entire adult life. Goodness gracious. It explains now the mindset behind the "rat" thing, I guess. And he's probably had no strong women friends/role models/etc in his adult life. JFC. FUCK PRISONS. I'm sad about him and angry about the things that have fucked up his psyche so bad.

This morning I looked out the window and saw him with a full backpack and starting to hike out on his own. I pointed it out to Angie, and she graciously gave him a ride into Patten. Idk what he'll do from there except hitchhike. I can only wonder what all he's been holding in... to go from friendly to completely set off to the point of quitting so quickly. He also left a lot of his things behind, wrapped up in a pile in his tarp outside - we'll have to figure out what to do with it all.

So we're back to 5 of us. Oh - Richard also said "Jean warned me about you!" Lolol. Does MCC attract an extra high quantity of these people, or do I just do an above-average job of avoiding them in the rest of my life?

July 30 - Trout Brook Farm
Jo, Eva & I are continuing on southbound Wadleigh today while the "stallions" (fast hikers Angie & Rian) take Freezeout 4 miles, then do the remaining mile of Frost Pond. At lunch we're on the edge of a clearing - possibly Wadleigh Bog? When we are done, we will have no more chainsawing yet assigned to us. I almost walked right over a decapitated bird in the middle of the trail. What predator does this, I wonder?

Richard had a TON of trash left over in his tent, including food (which I'd already figured... as he'd said he had problems with animals!) - It filled well over 2 trashbags worth when cleaned out. The tent is not salvageable, missing several components and reeking of piles of cigarette butts.

Jo has drifted off to sleep while Eva and I eat lunch.

(Later) Saw jewelweed in bloom by the beaver dam on Wadleigh! We had to turn back bc the bar nut on K-Dubs came loose, then off, after Eva had retightened its new chain. We couldn't find it on the

blowdown, then we had lunch and turned around after caching tools. Since the forecast is shitty for tomorrow, the tentative plan is to take the 3rd saw and do the few blowdowns between Russell and Pogy ponds, then return to North Peaks on Friday.

It's my dinner night but it'll be awhile still til I start my thai peanut sauce and spaghetti. There's a small blister on my left outside heel... moleskin time :(I'd thought it was just a hotspot coming down this afternoon... didn't hurt much at all. We found a robin's egg along the trail, and while holding it I squished it accidentally. Looked like a regular chicken egg yolk squishy. Also there was a v cool waterfall type area, with the stream cascading down a path carved into a single big piece of rock. We found an amazing glacial erratic yesterday - probably 4x the size of our cabin, with a big overhang large enough for a couple four-person tents underneath.

(later) I wonder if at some point we'll be able to get back at the end of the day and not have to listen to Jean being so damn loud. Oh! Jo mentioned that if we get done early in August, we'll be assigned to cut new trail on North Brother, which would include getting tools and water dropped by helicopter!

People were really into my dinner, especially Jo and Jean, who was quite skeptical but ended up loving it. Thankfully, it wasn't until after dinner that Jo told us stories from his EMT days, including one about a "headless horseman" (not the kind of head that belongs on your shoulders...)

June 14 - Russell Pond
Rainy and chilly so we did Russell Pond to Pogy Pond, stopped at the lean to, then came back. Plants! Orange Hawkweed - wood anemone - bunchberry - painted trilliums - rhodra/wild azalea - nodding trilliums? Done by 1:30pm. I'm annoyed... what else is new? Ranger Rebecca is not joining us after all, but she did leave us a note saying we should do the far end of the NW Basin trail. We'd been unsure if it was worth the effort to go back. Gah! Jo and I will hike there tomorrow, whilst the others go to finish North Peaks.

June 15 - Russell Pond
A 12 hour, 12 mile day on NW Basin. Left Russell Pond at 6am with Jo. Felt good the whole time, great weather. After Lake Cowles, the short stretch to Davis Pond was gorgeous and the lean-to quite nice. After that, a beaver had flooded a small section of trail, and felled a big enough birch across the way we had to saw it out. Then, up and up and up we went. A lil after 1300 we dropped packs and continued up to hit a couple more things with the hand saw, for a total of 14 blowdowns removed. We got to 3900 feet before turning back at 1330. Got back to camp around 1830. I split carrying the saw all day with Jo, and am pretty pleased about having built up my stamina to be near his.

June 16 - Russell Pond to Trout Brook Farm
Different story today. Felt very low energy - last day at Russell Pond, and thanks to folks' messes, cleaning and packing up went hella slow.

Eva stopped after less than half a mile to repack, then she, I and Jo stuck together never saw the other 3 folks the rest of the time. Shortly after Pogy Pond I was really suffering and had some sort of panic attack/heat stroke. Cried and put on a jacket and burrowed myself against the tread of the trail for a few minutes. Eventually got to feeling a lil better, but the whole way back to South Branch sucked. The plan had been for each group of 3 to do every other blowdown that needed to be cleared. The other group beat us back by 90 minutes, but did they backtrack to help with our share? Meet us at the trailhead to help take a load off? Or even just welcome us and ask how we were? The answer is D: none of the above.

Jean, Angie and Eva decided they wanted to go into Patten for pizza and snacks, at Jo allowed it as long as they brought snax for the group. It was nice to just be here with Jo and Rian, who made the alfredo that Angie was gonna make, but probably better. We thickened the sauce with Jo's pancake mix and it ROCKED. Angie is going (at my request) to take one of my dinner days next hitch in exchange, though I might just forget about that, because my cooking is better :)

I'm so annoyed by these people that I'm considering quitting again if the childishness keeps up. Thankfully, I have gotten permission from TBF Ranger Bruce to pitch a tent on the patch of lawn out back starting tomorrow. Rian has his tent here and is letting me use it the next 3 nights, then I'll bring my own next hitch. (Subie, along with the rest of our personal vehicles, are parked outside the Baxter gate). Tonite I'm sleeping on the ground floor on Jo's sleeping pad by the wood stove, bc the only available bed upstairs is the way-too-soft one, and it's musty and gross up there anyway. So I do have to listen to these Watersmeet Nimrods as they eat their frozen pizza... they drove 45 minutes there and 45 minutes back, and didn't even get real pizza!!

Linden mailed me a pill bottle of skittles with my pills. Best dessert ever. Also got a letter from Mom and another friend - Ranger

July 28 - TBF
Slept in on the real bed in the single room, from which Ranger Marshall's stuff has been vacated. Aaah, luxury! Much to the amusement of Angie and I, the boys spent an hour in a light drizzle rigging up a giant tarp outside, so that they can make a fire under it. They even angered some bees in the process. Now it's sunny out.

I decided I don't want to risk leaving and then re-entering the park all alone again. Composed an email to Rangers Liz & Rebekah about what happened the other day; I just wish I could actually send it now.

I forgot that my bike wheels only accommodate presta valves, and as a result I got the wrong tube from the shop in Houlton last week. No biking for me for a bit :(

Have opted to just stay at the cabin all day sewing - first a "Calm Yr Tits" patch, and then taking in the 3XL "DARE to Resist" tshirt I found at the thrift store in Millinocket, so it'll fit me. Then I'll cover up the words "drugs and violence". I always look for these at thrift stores and I finally found one!

Most of the day I've been sitting at the kitchen table while Richard sits at the fire pit outside. It's been a steady stream of entertainment as he mutters - sometimes directed at me, sometimes not, sometimes unclear. Fuck, bitch, shit and frickin are the most common words. Its mostly been pleasant, though once out of nowhere he started ranting about non-English speakers. (Does he realize 2 of this group use English as their 2nd language? 3, if we counted Jean?) I just gave that bit a cold shoulder. I do appreciate that he is "babysitting" people's boots drying around the low fire.

9pm - WOW. So much unexpected eventfulness, and also hatefulness, and hurt, and revelation - from Richard this evening. I'm alright, but not gonna write about it now. Thankful that Angie and Rian are here, and that Rian handled the situation gracefully.

It's raining and thundering... fitting but also very nice to listen to. I think Angie and Rian showered together, and they seem to be happy to cede the downstairs bedroom to me, so they can have upstairs all to themselves. That said... I am concerned enough about Richard's anger that I've propped a chair under the doorknob, and slid a mattock under my bed.

July 29 - Trout Brook Farm
Went out of the park to Shin Brook Falls this morning - very pretty, and I picked a pint of raspberries! This afternoon, stopped at Shin

insistent that we were not allowed to do so, and after calling HQ in Millinocket, the person she spoke with did not know the policy. She then showed me some document... which, in fact, stated that MCC teams receive 2 personal vehicle passes that may not be used on work days. I read this aloud but apparently because it did not also explicitly say that they *may* be used on non-work days, this was not enough for our goofball gate ranger.

I insisted on our right - along with Angie, who was driving Rian, whilst Richard just stayed in my car - while the attendant radioed some guy named Mike. Another (I'm assuming off-duty?) attendant chilling unhelpfully nearby told us Mike was law enforcement, so we'd "better calm down" (was he threatening to have us arrested??) although we were in fact impressively calm given the bizarre circumstances. Eventually, I said that we'd just be on our way to our cabin, and the attendants would need to sort it out with HQ. She clearly didn't like being wrong, and especially not in front of a coworker and park visitors (whom were being delayed while she bothered us, even though we offered to wait so they could get their reservations sorted first). So, she again called HQ and was able to reach Ranger Rebekah, who at last set her straight. Her parting words to me were to "not be so aggressive, because that's not helpful", lolol. In fact, being insistent - if that can be termed "aggressive" - was indeed the only thing that helped us to not spend the next two nights stranded! Thinking back, I still can't tell if she was just very confused, supremely ignorant, or decided she didn't like us for some reason. Usually, when we pull up to the gate, the attendant will see our pass and just wave us through.

This morning, actually, I had a similar moment where I was told to "calm down" (by Jo, then also Eva), for simply asserting myself. Jo took issue with my re-writing K-Dubs' name on the saw, as it had faded out. He thought I shouldn't have used permanent marker... I'm not sure he understands how markers work. Let's use magic marker... that'll be great! Or just not label any saws - not confusing at all!

Big shocker - people, young & old, men & women, are not used to queerdos like me standing up for ourselves. And its not even that much about authority bc, I think, being a team leader in americorps or a BSP gate attendant gives you about .0001% more actual authority than anyone else, sorry not sorry.

I bought kettle corn oreos. I think they taste like maple cookies.

Richard's tarp flew off his tent and it got soaked. Alas, his being a man-who-is-always-right does not grant him special powers. Yeah... I think I'd better try to skedaddle tomorrow night. Was looking forward to chilling at the cabin, but I didn't realize 3 others would be here too. Maybe I'll hike in the morning, then go to the national monument and see if one of those sites is open.

Remedios, by Aurora Levins Morales: "dip your finger in the molasses bucket and savor the taste of burnt bridges like the smoke of a dying past."

Rebecca left it all on the table here. Feelin bushed. Also today: A Mama moose and her calf gave us a send off along Russell Pond as we broke camp this morning! - Flushed a grouse - snakey boi - azaleas were still plentiful at higher elevation - "Petra" (as Angie named the hare hanging around the Trout Brook Farm cabin) let me watch her right outside the back door for quite a while.

June 17 - Trout Brook Farm
Feeling physically ok but still exhausted this morning. Jo started talking about the plan for the day to do the South Branch Mountain trail, a steep 7 mile loop, and he and Jean said "that sounds like nothing." After that, my tears didn't wanna stay in.... that's very do-able, but definitely does not sound like "nothing"! I went on sat on the porch and Jo came and offered me the day off, which I gladly accepted. Nobody seems to give a rat's ass that I'm feeling so shitty.

As everyone else was getting ready, Eva discovered she has a nasty-looking infected pinky toe. She says she didn't even look at her feet last night. Yikes. She is joining the day off club. We will discuss foot care.

I'm really discouraged about not performing very well the other day. Not to mention being in a team with 5 emotionally illiterate people. The thing is, its now 7:10 and nobody's ready to go... at least I would've been (logistically, if not mentally) ready 20 minutes ago. I feel like with a lil more mental support/camaraderie I'd really feel at the top of my game even after the past couple days.... but instead I am left wondering if everyone thinks I'm not pulling a fair share. Or am just weak and less capable. Not to mention just uncool and boring. 9+ more weeks of this?? And who knows what the next team will be like?

10am - Washed and hung up gross socks to dry. Yesterday I broke the antenna on my NOAA radio and haven't been able to fix it, so no weather report, since the 2 shitty Baxter radios we've been issued (for comms, on which a ranger reads the weather every so often) are away with Jo. Also, the propane tank has hit empty.

9pm - I'm in Rian's tent for the night, hurrah! Everybody inside says they're getting bit up by no-see-ums.... because the kids broke the window screen. Jean made pork chops with pumpkin mash and rice. Rian, who doesn't eat pork, said that he was ok with this and that he would eat his beef franks with the meal instead... I hope he's not actually too upset. The 4 people who went today said the trail was a lot steeper than they thought, so I'm v glad I got to rest. They said the sign for Black Cat Mountain was in the wrong spot, and also facing the wrong way. A flatter hike is on tap for tomorrow. I got a lil more snuggle in with Eva at the kitchen table. Platonic cuddling/cuddletonic plating (flannel) ?

June 18 - Trout Brook Farm
We did the Five Ponds trail. There were, true to name, five (5) ponds - and, 69 blowdowns to clear (nice!), most of em needing the chainsaw. (The Thing about these counts is that a complicated tree that takes an hour to clear, and one where you can just heft a skinny trunk over your shoulder and carry it away, both count as 1). Angie,

Jean and I went until we ran out of gas one mile from the end of the loop. Very very buggy, but it was drizzly and cool enough that I kept up with the others' pace ok (Jean likes to go fast). Lots of slugs and snails! The other group did the Fowler Brook trail, which they say features lots of pools and falls.

Tent night #2. Unbelievably #blessed. At the end of this coming off-hitch, we'll be 4 weeks, or 1/3 of the way done with the summer session, which is kinda wild. According to the plan Jo just announced, tomorrow is gonna be unbelievably dumb: do the remaining 1 mile from today (with all 6 of us), do saw maintenance (almost all finished today), then go to the Patten library for Americorps bureaucracy boner bullshit. Eva is poking herself with a fork, and Jo is slapping himself bc they have so many itchy bug bites.

June 19 - Trout Brook Farm
Last day of Hitch #2, tho it's not really a work day. We're at Patten library, a tiny renovated church building, where a sign informs us "FACEBOOK AND YOU-TUBE ARE BLOCKED". We finished our remaining mile plus saw maintenance by 930. Jo and I are crossing our fingers that the kids behave and we don't scare the bejeesus out of the librarian/volunteer/whomever. Ofc, he's also not prepared and is on a computer looking up whatever "job training" bureaucracy module we are supposed to be doing.

[30 minutes later]... So the thing we're supposed to be doing is organizing some kind of volunteer event... without actually identifying or prioritizing any needs... or any of the other stuff you would do when organizing an event... yay americorps nonsense.

Eva and I found a spot by the creek in Patten to eat lunch. She asked me I felt about her and Jean being "a thing"... which I had already known based upon some noises that were not intended for me to hear, emanating from the Russell Pond toolshed late one night when I got up to pee. I cautioned her to be careful and also to ask for my safe sex kit if she ever needs it, but stopped short of telling her she's actin' a fool. I'm so forgiving. Now we're at the gas station down the road. Eva's car is out of gas back at the entrance to Baxter where we park our personal vehicles. She's filling up the can we use for saw gas, and I just stopped her from putting diesel in it.

Was glad I got to chat with Linden for a bit earlier. Looking at their photos give me feels. Might also have involved the headache I got from having that damn gas can in the car. Petra, the snowshoe hare, is especially active lately.

The team has decided (at my raising the question) that the gender-neutral term for aunt/uncle would be "oont", so now I am the group's responsible "oont." MCC Staff Kat is here, but mostly just talking to Jo in secret. They did say that crew leader Berlin's team (which includes Mars), working near Katahdin, is getting helicopter drops working on the Dudley trail reroute. Should be fun to talk about that. Kat is staying here tonite and eating cold veggie progresso soup from a can... yuk...

quite so into that as I am out here. Currently alternating hot pink & forest green.

Pluto's spot in the U.S. Route 1 scale model solar system.
The sun is 50 feet across, 40 miles to the north.

July 26 - Trout Brook Farm
It's pizza night! Writing as I wait for mine to bake.

Rainy all day. Rian, Eva and I were going to go south on Wadleigh... hiked in 50 minutes, Phoenix failed to start no matter what we tried, so we had to go back. Phoenix is a Jonsered brand saw (all our others have been Husqvarnas), and we can't replace the spark plug because we don't have the correct sized bolt in our kit. We drove all the way back to TBF, picked up loppers (which we stupidly didn't have in the car), then corridored thru the thicccccccc impassable section of raspberries and ferns. I had a swell time while getting totally soaked. Pulling up ferns revealed tons of blueberries and other flowers, and the trail is now much wider, prettier and hopefully ready for a greater diversity of flora. I mostly worked alone, which is more my speed. The other team finished northbound Wadleigh to Freezeout - then was surprised to see us on their hike back, happy they didn't have to walk thru the jungle to get to the car. They also reported the biggest blueberry and raspberry field to date.

This 4.5 day work week thing is weird. With us doing Americrap bureaucrap stuff tomorrow, the plan is to go into Millinocket.

Eva: "Have you guys heard of New Brunswick?" Richard: "I think it's like an hour east of Lewiston?" They don't realize it's a PROVINCE, for crying out loud, eh. Later they retired to watch saved teevee on their phones.

July 27 - Millinocket Library
1130am - Picked up a fresh! warm! blueberry pie! from the Amish stand for only $6.50! Richard found a cheat sheet online for this stupid FEMA test we have to do [apparently in case of national emergency americorps workers can get mobilized by FEMA lmao], so I passed.

4:30 - Back at TBF - Just before arriving back here it started to rain and thunder, and was quite the storm for about half an hour. Sadly, I would've been able to bring in my boots and socks "drying" outside, had it not been for getting delayed half an hour at the north gate, in a very odd interaction with a gate attendant we've seen and talked to several times before... tho I guess, its possible we haven't interacted whilst coming in with our personal vehicles off-hitch? She was very

July 24 - Trout Brook Farm
Eva did not accomplish laundry off-hitch, and as a result is wearing my underwear today. She, Jo and I did Wadleigh Brook, and somehow got talking about sex for a long time. I think we gave Eva ample good advice. Less hiking, lots of cutting. A good hour and a half on one big ol pile of aspen. 80 degrees, sunny and windy, lots of bugs. Not long after 1pm, Jo broke the saw - tried to go too far on the compression side of a big log and got stuck. The bar tip sprocket won't turn and the chain is beat.

In good news, at the Frost Pond Gate, we ran into Arianne, MCC Matt and Team Leader Dylan, who let us know they are assigned to do the Freezeout Trail, starting from Trout Brook Farm today! So now Jo, Eva and I are hanging out under the big spruce at the end of the driveway to intercept them on their way out, and ask to switch the bar and chain from Alec to put on K-Dubs, as well as do some logistical planning. We also learned their team is bush camping at the end of Peewee Road. Part of me is a lil jealous, but I can't deny the cabin's luxury. For example: we have freezepops.

Eva seems to have decided she wants to stay on for fall. She's also wearing Rian's "Get off my nuts"-patched pants today... which now have a large rip in the other buttcheek. She looks pretty badass though, and I've been (consensually) taking photos of said, uh, bad ass.

July 25 - Trout Brook Farm
Wadleigh Brook Trail at Hudson Pond. A super beautiful spot with a strong west wind coming off the pond, loons calling. Angie, Richard and I lost the trail within a minute north of Wadleigh Mountain Road, amidst a huge (but delicious) raspberry thicket, and we went every direction except that of the trail. Before long I got out my compass and GPS app to find the trail again at a spot where, ironically, it's clearly been corridored quite well within the past couple years. Only the short section near the road was hopelessly overgrown.

I think Richard is having trouble being paired with two younger women... he kept not believing I was pointing us in the right direction for the trail, but I did lead us there. He not only seems convinced he is always right, he can also just be a real jerk sometimes. Also I did a big downed pine - I'm getting better at the thicccc ones. We had a brief delay when I ripped the ratty starter cord straight out and we had to replace it.

That section of trail had lots of cool stuff, including another stash of a very old crosscut saw ("I'd just fuckin take that if none of y'all were looking," Richard says) and tools, and later a big pile of old timey cans and bottles. You wonder why people left this stuff here... and also what generations from now will think of today's landfills. Also: saw ghost pipe! For the most part I'm actually very satisfied this week.

MCC Liz brought us our mail (which is good, because I was out of my Effexor) and also a watermelon. The pills came with a sweet as fuck note from Linden, a hippie as fuck lamb-mint-currant protein bar, and also my MN absentee ballot. Did my nails - never been

June 20 - Trout Brook Farm

I slept awesomely in the lil corner next to the wood stove, until I woke up at 5 and ever since have been rewriting in my head the wimpy lil handout from americorps about how to put on a volunteer event. Maybe I should rewrite it for real... Took Rian to Millinocket. Learned that Eva went to a clinic and was told to stay off her foot for at least a week. We saw Mars's car in front of the cafe so went in, but they weren't there. After we ordered a big plate of brekkie tots to share, Jean & Eva came in along with someone they met last night, a very loud women working nearby as a river guide. I made sure they did not try to all cram in our booth, hurried up and finished my food and left before long.

Turns out MCC Kat is the person who wrote that volunteer handout, which I called "stupid" over the breakfast table back at the cabin :D She apologized for "leaving things out"... I don't think she "left things out", it's just stupid and the values it reflects stink. She did say that prior to last year, instead of this, they had field team members attend some day-long professional general volunteerism seminar. Then the seminar organizers asked MCC not to come back because they smelled too bad. TRUE STORY lmao.

6pm - with Mars at Lily Bay State Park! We got here via the gravel Kahtadin Ironworks Road, thru a rec area with a $9 day use fee... but it was worth it for the beautiful surroundings and quiet and a nice lunch spot along the AT on the other side of a shallow stream. We exited via the "Hedgehog Gate", on to Greenville, and here it's nice and shady with a breeze.

Exchanged emails with Natalie - whose sweet fuzzy cat, Sadhbh, passed away last week. I miss her already. I miss Linden too. And I am grateful for Mars's company, but I am also finding myself wishing I had someone who was more than just a new friend out here.

June 21 - Lily Bay State Park
Longest day of the year - seems like that really snuck up fast. I don't mind a lil less sunlight though - earlier to bed! Fell asleep as soon as I hit the pillow last night. Took a stroll down to the boat launch this morning - lots of blue jays out. The best thing I've brought with me to Maine, I think, is my heavy wool blanket. It's warm and comforting, and not having the sort of total backcountry experience that I expected, allows me to use it lots.

4pm - Stayed in the tent til noon - then organized supplies and took a hike. Lots of robins, woodpeckers, and very tame chipmunks. Walking firewood back along the road, saw a snake, a robins egg, and a very skinny fawn walking towards me... I wonder if it lost its mom. Also teeny tiny strawberries!

Very windy - can tell how they handle lots of blowdowns here (and just leave the brush by the side of the trail - at Baxter we're expected to "naturalize" it by swamping the brush relatively out of sight). I get cell service at the beach, where a big floatplane just went over.

Built myself a one-match fire (woo!) to cook dinner over, and hearing loon calls now. Mars said their team did get the heli drop at Chimney Pond, and although they were not there in person to receive it, they already know several of their tools are missing :(

June 22 - Lily Bay State Park
Drove around trying to find Big Spencer Mountain, but none of the lil gravel roads have any signage at all - I didn't want to get too lost, the GPS was shit and my atlas not good enough. I did get to brake for a friendly red fox and also a BIG bull moose. I backtracked south of Kakadjo ("Population: Not Much") to #4 Mountain. Summiting took not quite 90 minutes. Why do I think hiking with a bra underneath my shirt is EVER a good idea? It's way too hot. Big view of Moosehead Lake. Lots of honeybees. Parts of the trail here clearly used to go straight up, and have since been converted to that great modern invention Baxter has not yet discovered: SWITCHBACKS! At the summit is an old fire tower, accessible by ladder, but in great disrepair, with only half the wooden platform on top remaining, and 1 of the 3 guy cables dangling loose.

Lots of land in these parts has Weyerhauser signs, on which the logging company extols the virtues of having their land open for recreation. Notably absent is any mention of the value of the forest for its own sake.

Signage: "THIS IS GOD'S COUNTRY! WHY BURN IT DOWN AND MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HELL? Prevent Forest Fires." "Moosehead Maritime Museum - Thanks for Cruising With Us!"

June 23 - Lily Bay State Park
Thinking about surgery again without any solid conclusion (prompted in part by waking up in the middle of the night with that familiar prurient interest). Successfully made pancakes on my pocket rocket for brekkie! Mars's vegan buttery spread helped, but I did a couple with my olive oil, too. I think the tricks are a little oil and flax in the batter itself, and keeping the heat as low as possible - plus making many mini sized cakes.

730p - A good calm day. Lots of paper thin skipping rocks at the beach. Teeny pinecones and driftwood bits. Made another good fire. Saw the fawn again, with a doe this time, grazing by the road. I think Mars is opening up to me a bit more. They're pissed because their partner, K, is dealing with a buncha bullshit in a group back home

7pm, Aroostook: Been sitting quietly sewing a pink and black flag - the black has pirate skulls on one side! - from the fabric I bought today. Listening to neighboring campsites is interesting. Couple to the left is reading quietly in French to their toddler. Man on the right is in serious need of calming his tits.

July 22 - Aroostook State Park
Noon - Lunch in Houlton. All the local food shops seem closed, so I opted for fuckin Subway. Early this a.m, I hiked the 3 mile Qua Qua Jo Mountain trail, which Ive been told MCC greatly improved recently. It took about 2.5 hours to come up and down both peaks - very nice views! Steep but short and not too difficult. A very nice tent platform on top of the south peak... not sure who owns it, but a tempting spot for another time. I touched up my hair before leaving. Buzzed it to 5/8" - hopefully it's not too ridiculously patchy in the back where it was hard to see, I'm pretty new at this. If so, I'm sure my team will laugh right away to let me know. On the road again now....

7:30pm - Trout Brook Farm - Well, the shitshow has started again. Rian has discovered that in the U.S. (unlike in Australia, apparently), you have to leave the frozen pot pie in the container before you put it in the oven.

Gossip from Jo is that Crew Leader Adam's team has totally crashed and burned. First, someone hit themselves in the shin with an axe. Then, Will got lost for 20 hours and spent the night in a ditch. Then last Monday, Adam just didn't show up. The rest of the team has been dispersed elsewhere.

Rian is very happy about the taste of the cookie dough popcorn, but very displeased with himself that he does. I took a photo of the back of my head (why didn't I earlier?)... fucked it up real good, alright. Jo says "it's not terrible", but it kind of is :D Eva has been told by the MCC office she is not allowed to saw for 2 weeks. Except she tells me that the reason she isn't sawing isn't that she's on her 3rd pair of chaps, it's that she broke her glasses and her vision is a lil blurry.

I'm going to have a poor night's sleep on the futon tonite, so that I can better appreciate a poor night's sleep in my tent the rest of the week.

2am - Woke up and can't get myself back to sleep on the futon, so am having imaginary conversations. "I'm having a hard time." "What can we do to support you?" "Learn about interlocking systems of oppression and acknowledge the roadblocks they create to having as full of an experience as more privileged members of this group?" ".....oh"

July 23 - Trout Brook Farm
Angie, Eva and I did Frost Pond. Much hiking, little time to saw, little progress. Much bugs, much humidity. But no rain. Now sprinkling while I'm settling in the tent. MCC Matt brought us back "K-Dubs" the chainsaw, in exchange for "Alec", which was leaking bar oil. Now we have Moxie, K-Dubs, and Phoenix.

canada lilies

Later, Near Houlton - US Route 1, along the NE edge of Maine, has the world's largest scale model of the solar system: 1 mile = 1 astronomical unit. Pluto is a marble inside the rest stop visitor building.

I'm grumping about the hot weather, and MCC Kat's condescending email response to concerns I sent. However, I am enjoying the goodies I got from the Amish farm stand outside Patten: a cinnamon raisin bread loaf, rhubarb, and dandelion jelly.

4pm - Aroostook State Park. The site of the first trans-Atlantic balloon launch is nearby. It's a lil cooler here - I set up my tent and am now naked waiting for the sun to go down some more. There's private toilets/showers here - with outlets and a mirror! If the outlets work, I can cut my hair.

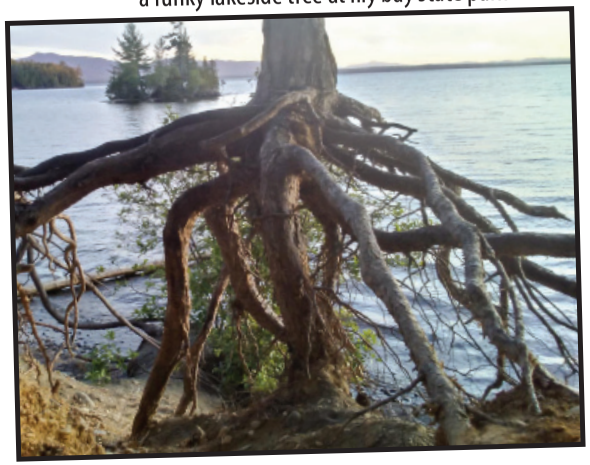
July 21 - Aroostook State Park
It's less than a month till this tour in Baxter is over. Going to sleep last night, I pondered the question of whether to stay for the fall session, or leave. Kat asked in her email "who exactly I don't want to be placed with". The problem here is that if I specify this (as if they don't already know who the biggest assholes are??), it makes somebody else more likely to have to put up with them. I want to stay for fall to get some experience with other types of work, but it'd also be nice to go home, and it'd also be nice to not have so many terribly obnoxious/miserable days with as much risk of getting seriously hurt. Of course, there's also the possibility of new people joining up for fall who might be rad. The thing is - my problem isn't so much with specific people, as it is with the culture of the org.

I cut my hair! I still needs some touching up, but I feel so much better. I'll wait a couple weeks then re-dye it, I figure. Been nice listening to sounds in the tent - lots of cooing mourning doves. I have blankets, food, water, and time to linger... all is well. Teenage boy across the way: "Stop talking about school! It's summer! Is there no escape?!" Later, a small child: "Are we allowed to climb trees here? ... Yes? Yay!!"

2:30 - Presque Isle - There is a legit YARN SHOP/LIQUOR STORE COMBO here - no joke! I bought an embroidery hoop. Lots of empty storefronts. Found a lil a sandwich shop, and everything on my get list except for a new H20 bladder. Also: another Marden's, home of rejected food flavors on clearance. Bought some cookie dough flavored popcorn for the crew to try, along with some actual food and fabric stuffs. Later, Linden and I chatted a lil while I did laundry. I also did ten pushups (I am pleased with this).

in Florida. Tomorrow's plan: back to busy. Early to Millinocket, laundry, shopping, wifi, then Patten.

a funky lakeside tree at lily bay state park



June 24 - Debbie's Diner in Patten
Ready again for excruciatingly slow group grocery shopping. First pizza. I got pink and brown nail polish at Rite Aid ;) Been having to pee constantly. On the side of the road. In the bushes behind the laundromat. In a bottle in the car. Maybe I should reduce my spiro [testosterone blocker] dose even further? This is gonna be the last 9 days on, 5 days off hitch - then we switch to 5/2. Before then, I'll visit Poa in Vermont.

Listened to some Maine Public Radio. An interesting program about AI robots - people are reluctant to smash and destroy them if the robot has been given a name first. It also talked about gendered robot names like "Alexa" (assistant) versus "Watson" (encyclopedia). Another segment talking about beaver re-introduction in various places. Beaver activity refills groundwater and enhances water quality. In the 40's, Idaho tried to introduce beavers via helicopter drop.

Considering mailing one of my zines (about my Lake Superior bicycle trip last year) to Mars for next "weekend" since I may not see them for a lil while. Arianne said her team may be coming to work on the north side nearer to us - apparently everyone is finishing work faster than expected. She also says there is a rumor that my team is really slacking... HA!

News check: Another cop murdered another man in north Minneapolis. Motherfuckers. Meanwhile, the old fogies in the diner are talking about the horrors of the Trump administration and separating families at the Mexican border. But apparently there was also a recent checkpoint on I-5 north of here, arresting folks near the Canadian border. These particular fogies seem nice, but the number of "thin blue line" flags around town is highly, highly disturbing.

Going to try to channel calm this evening... like the moose... or the raven... or the iris? I dunno - calm things :) But in reality I'm so often feeling right on the edge of having a breakdown. I wish I'd given Mars a big hug when they left this morning.

9pm Trout Brook Farm - How much am I actually challenging myself at the things I really want to challenge out here? Outdoor skills? Work? I hope we'll be doing more than chainsaw work eventually...

a reason to stick around for fall session, I suppose. Since I've kinda given up on any deeper friendships with this crew, my main challenge might be enduring both the physical tests required, and the alone time... oh, a familiar one there. Is this worth it? I fear depression is finding a door back inside me.

June 25 - Trout Brook Farm
Pretty much cried myself to sleep last night, and I think it rained all night - still now at 6am. I'm the first one up. I think everyone else gets less sleep off-hitch, than on. Maybe there'll be good flowers today. We are going outside the park boundaries, to another plot of land owned by Baxter near Mount Chase where we will be doing the very first cutting and stumping on a newly-planned interpretive trail loop. There, we'll be staying in our tents.

7:30pm Mount Chase - A mostly annoying but not demanding day. As I predicted, the Mt. Chase site was very hard to find due to poor instructions. The planned trail was marked with flagging over the winter... LIME GREEN FLAGGING!!! wtafadfjasdflasdklf, did they not realize that TREES ARE ALSO GREEN?!

Angie and I deduced that the spur to our intended camping area seemed to be marked with double orange/green flagging... eventually, the guys came around to our conclusion, and finally around lunchtime we set up camp. The Jean/Eva saga didn't help either. Jean forgot his sleeping bag at the cabin, so we had to turn around. Eva, following in her own car because of a doctor's appointment mid-week, realized she was on empty again so had to borrow money from Rian for gas.

After lunch we starting tackling the trail with no real plan - just saw and lop at will! I interrupted Jean's initial chainsaw binge to suggest we first reach a consensus as to the best route between the ~100ft spaced flags, before doing any cutting. The process got a lil better after that - but still frustrating and not very ecologically minded. Separately, both Jean and Jo felled small understory trees without looking around first, leading to branches hitting my helmet. Without the facescreen on I probably would've been cut up. Much of the day I've been thinking about whether I should just throw in the towel.

There's a gravel road connecting to an overgrown old logging road, which is just as fast a way to get to get to our campsite, from our eating area/future trailhead (where we parked the cars), and along it I found a raven feather. I have put it outside my tent in the hopes it will grant me wisdom.

Made couscous curry for dinner on the whisperlite/grasshopper stoves, and it was a success. I was EXTREMELY pleased that Jo and Jean took it upon themselves to try to get the stoves up and running, failed, after which point I showed them how.

There are more teeny strawberries along the road! I ate a few - sweet and yummy. I think today marked the first time in years I've pooped in a hole in the woods, and definitely the first time I've wiped with moose maple (aka striped maple) leaves. It's my new favorite tree - the leaves are enormous and soft, and the bark a gorgeous deep green.

July 18 - Trout Brook Farm
Angie, Rian and I are doing WB Trail. I worked on a huge spruce that sadly is still hung up. I want to fell the lil birch holding it up the rest of the way, but the others want to consult Johansel. Rian is blowing bubbles again.

Last night Eva joined me in the tent again and shared some of what's up - some v nasty family stuff back home last weekend. I'm glad I'm here to be the only person up for talking about hard shit like that with her, she says.

5pm - Saw a flock of cedar waxwings! Earlier, we met a hiker who had come all the way from Webster Outlet via the far west end of Freezeout Trail - a good 8.5 miles. He said there were lots and lots of blowdowns still ahead of us, and was very happy to see us and the clear trail ahead of him.

Rian and Angie have been super flirtatious with each other lately. Wonder if anything will come of this - a lil apprehensive, but so far I'm just amused. Rian got a good pic of me poking my head out of a big pile of downed, still green spruce, like a prairie dog. Then we did an impressive before/after pic. We did so much sawing today it took less than an hour to walk back.

WE HAD AMAZING FISH TACOS

My lousy water bladder leaked a ton inside my bag on the hike back - even with a trash bag liner, my butt got soaked. Not sure the cause. Will try to find a replacement this weekend if I can. Ranger Marshall showed us a photo of a gorgeous yellow lily up by the TBF campsites, and we looked it up in the Audobon book in the cabin - a Canada Lily.

July 19 - Trout Brook Farm
Ate my first wild Maine blueberries today! On our return hike along Frost Pond Trail I saw a fire-burned stump with a 40 foot tall spruce growing inside of it. This is why I like hiking slow :) Jo has been in a MOOD giving us all very arbitrary orders. More reason to go slow I guess? This eve, I walked down past the TBF campground while the others watched "TV" pre-downloaded on someone's phone. I had a better time: saw the Canada Lilies, blooming toadflax, wild lupine, and a kingfisher!

Jo told us that last year, when his crew did rock work for a conservation corps in New York for several months, they would take turns choosing music to play *all day long*. Can you imagine - months in the forest and missing out on all of nature's sounds and wildlife because you'd rather listen to music all day every day?

July 20 - Trout Brook Farm
After blowdown work this morning we encountered some visitors with a flat tire. I was sitting in the back, and everyone else immediately jumped out of the car to help. How many MCC'ers does it take to change a tire? :D I relaxed.

9pm – I got to sort of snuggle with Eva for a little bit and she painted my toenails sparkly green. I am pleased.

July 17 – Patten

2:15pm – As it's rainy all day, we decided to do our half day today and come to the library here. Plenty of "blunders" in the morning. Dropped off Jo/Eva/Rian at Wadleigh Mountain Rd's junction with Frost Pond Trail, then drove on so Angie, Richard and I could do a portion of Wadleigh Brook trail. On our intended route, the gate was locked, and the code Jo had given us didn't work. So we continued up the Mountain Road towards the picnic shelter at "Blunder Bog" and another intersection with the WB trail. Another gate in the way. I got out, and just around the corner was a third gated road, this one unlocked. I checked the code on the combo lock – 7172, same as the code to our cabin! So we decided to go back to Bobcat Road, as it would be a more logical section to do first. Sure enough – same code, success! But... then, alas, our map was not detailed enough to locate the WB trailhead.. so we went back towards Blunder Bog again. We couldn't find the trailhead... until we realized it wasn't behind the gaggle of parked logging trucks. We start to unload our gear and... WTF, my pack is missing??? Did it get taken out at the cabin?? We head back towards Frost Pond Trail, thoroughly ticked at all this back and forth. A pickup coming the other way flags us down and tells us: the other crew has my pack, having taken it out by mistake. Thankfully, Eva has thought to put the cover on, since it's pouring cats and dogs now. We get there and Jo is very apologetic. I say, I don't wanna drive back yet again, let's leapfrog together on Frost Pond, and so we did. There were big piles of downed trees, so we made mayyyybe 2/3 mile of progress before turning back around 11:40.

I like Richard's eagerness to help and he's very sociable and nice to work with. He did drink 2 cans of Pepsi before noon. He seems to have plenty of chainsaw experience, says he worked in the logging business for a time... but isn't allowed to saw here because he didn't take MCC's training, which seems messed up. Seems like there should be a test or something to satisfy them. Smh. He also had a lot of unflattering gossip to share about his previous team, including a teammate who quit in disgust, and a rather inappropriate relationship. He very much did not enjoy the previous team leader's jambalaya, but is satisfied with Rian's.

Here at the library I reserved a site at Arostook State Park for Friday and Saturday nights, and talked to Linden. Jo told us stories about riding his fixie around Manhattan kicking off people's side mirrors. I was impressed. Rian is drawing everyone's "iconic look" on the lil dry erase board here. Mine is sticking my tongue out.

I'm not sure if I've accurately conveyed in my journal my frustration with the lack of thinking skills of folks here. "How long are we camping again?" "Where are we going again?" and like questions over, and over, and over. Also, Jo, in charge of packing the food we acquired, forgot our spices back at the cabin. No Spices!? Also, my lighter seems to be the only one present amongst all 6 of us. I haven't let on yet that I also have matches in my bear canister. Can you imagine if we had no way to cook?!

June 26 – Mount Chase

I've got a 20 degree sleeping bag, warm extra blanket, warm clothes... why am I getting so dang cold?

So far, the wisdom of the raven feather tells me that the best reason for sticking it out is to have the words on my resume later. Which is both good and stupid. Lorde I just wanna snuggle Linden and cry.

Lunch break – I'm stuck together with Jean and Eva today. It's not as annoying as I feared, but I've been seriously considering telling Jo that I'm out if this happens again. They're just not safe at all, and super duper flaky. They've each only brought one liter of water for the day, and Eva spilled much of hers. They've used tons of my bug spray because they have none. Most of all, they're being super cuddly with each other. Eva's been having trouble starting the saw all morning, and Jean keeps egging her on saying "I want you to get it!" even when she clearly wants to give it a rest. Later, Eva cut her chaps open. Jean is unconcerned about keeping a safe distance when felling. Sadly, I made a mistake and felled a tree into a snag I didn't see, knocking a big branch down near them. I apologized and started to talk about it but they both shrugged it off, not concerned.

Amazingly, all of this has been less annoying than the fact that these lime green pieces of flagging are so damn hard to see. They Really! Flagged It! Lime Green! We spent 40 minutes looking for one flag at a distance of 100 feet. I wish I'd brought some of my own to give it a different color.

7:30pm – Took the car with Jo to fill up on water at the stream down the way, and we talked briefly about today's bullshit. He had some pretty harsh words for the two snugglemuffins when we got back – then they were back at it in 15 minutes.

this interpretive sign about my new fave tree was at merryspring nature center in camden

Jean and Angie were on cook duty, but

again couldn't get the stoves going. I noticed they were using unleaded mix instead of white gas, so I helped them switch it, then Angie tended the stoves while Jean ran off to be a fragile flower snowflake about it or whatever. Thankfully, he'd already prepared big portions of good food - we all got lots of (canned) chicken, guac, and spicy beans and rice. I even have a leftover portion for lunch tomorrow. For all his faults, he's a good cook - I suspect our team is eating the best of any. Supposedly, Ranger Liz and MCC Kat may both be here tomorrow as well. Still counting on that raven feather.

June 27 - Mount Chase
Ranger Liz did come to check on us and was our savior by adding orange flagging to the lime green. Kat also came, is staying the night, and brought us a new saw. All the chainsaws have names. "Riddler" is replacing "K-Dubs", which had a faulty choke. We received "feedback forms" from Kat. Woo boy. Gonna wait til I'm in my tent to do that.

Yummy rice/beans/enchilada sauce from Jo for dinner. I traded Rian my last two soy sauce packets for one of his teriyaki chicken ramen meals. I am pleased. Jean did not join us for dinner - nor his turn on dishes. We have also determined that except for Jo and I, nobody else is using the poophole we dug. Idk if they're just holding it or... ...?

June 28 - Mount Chase
Jean was up at 55:0 to ask me what time it was. Then again at 6:10.

7pm - Rainy all day and we're all pretty wet. Jo, Rian and I spent the day stumping and lopping. Learning to use the griphoist for stumping was fun, more so after I got good at it. "Moxie" the chainsaw was finicky all day, and I had lots of trouble starting it. The griphoist is a serious arm workout. I think this is my fave 3-person crew to be on.

For dinner Rian made falafel and it was damn good for us cold wet rats. We all had lots of fun being extra goofy over dinner as a result.

I am determined not to poop this evening so as to get back on a morning poop schedule.

I enjoy looking over to my tent pocket, where I've put a photo of Linden smiling at me. Yesterday, Liz dropped off 3 letters. Woohoo!

June 29 - Mount Chase
Jo stuck me with him and Angie today, instead of the usual rotation I'd have with Jean, which I appreciated lots. I'm enjoying stumping. Another trade with Rian: 2 red pepper packets for 3 big pieces of jerky! Poor Rian misses the spices we forgot, but I was prepared with my own personal stash. Packets are great currency.

It was sunny today until scattered showers in the afternoon. We encountered Jean's group turning back around 330 after a teeny tiny thunder rumble in the distance. For someone who sometimes acts super macho, he's really a wimp about things like thunder and chilly temps. Eva cut her chaps again today - TWICE. I saw a huge frog,

I walked around the rocky shoreline of Matagammon Lake below the entrance gate - very pretty, little former/sometimes islands connected by land bridges. Found a couple great potential picnic spots, big rocks, sideways trees, cool flowers, bugs, burned rocks and stumps. I want to take Linden here. I also learned that the International Appalachian Trail - a less formalized continuation of the AT going further north, heads along the entrance road before hitting a singletrack towards Katahdin Lake. Seems fascinating.

8:30 - In my tent tonight. I try to move it around to different spots to keep the grass and moss happy, so tonite I've set up in the far back of the lawn. Eva is late again. Rian says Richard, who has not yet arrived, is the "older redneck looking guy," which rings a bell now.

July 16 - Trout Brook Farm
Eva showed up last night after we went to bed. Today we did the Dwelley Pond trail. Super pretty. Rian and I went from the north end, the others from the south. Beaver dams and ponds - got warned away by a vociferous grouse that flew right up to me. Thought I heard a grunting moose but couldn't see it. Also: Lots of the weird yellow mushrooms that people say will turn red and get you high -- Wild strawberries -- Moose tracks -- Rian blew bubbles atop some fresh moose scat. Yes, he brought a bottle of bubble fluid. -- The patch I made for him is not staying in place :(I guess it's his big fat butt (lol - it's quite the opposite) is stretching em out. Should be a quick fix job. --T he hiking pole Jo has been lending me broke :(The price you pay for lightweight carbon fiber fancyness is a lack of durability.

Rian bought SEVERAL pairs of suspenders at goodwill AND a mug for the cabin that says "home is where you poop most comfortably". MCC Taylor and Richard ended up arriving at the cabin about 5 minutes before we got back. Ranger Rebekah also stopped by on her way thru with a letter for me. I was sharpening a saw outside and didn't get to ask her about any of our future plans, alas. For dinner I made baked tofu with roasted brussels sprouts, carrots and cauliflower, plus peppers & onions in couscous. It got good reviews. Richard seems alright so far. Says he's done farming and construction jobs, wanted to try something different, so got this on a recommendation from a friend. Seems like a regular 30-something working class country dude. He also has a cool tent setup (he's opted for tenting out back too), with a tarp creating a vestibule of sorts.

(later) I've been organizing and cleaning the cabin. Found some MCC paperwork and BSP newspapers from 2013, and 1st aid supplies from seemingly decades ago.

July 14 - Trout Brook Farm
Wrote a letter home and now enjoying a tall stack of pancakes. My bottle of "Pancakes Not Pipelines!" Ojibwe maple syrup is almost out. For some reason I can't get the NOAA station on either my radio or the car's today. Guess I'll have to see if I can hear the radio from Ranger Bruce (who has gone back on rotation to replace Marshall) next door at 7am, or walk up to the trailhead to see if he posts the forecast there. Leisurely mornings are so nice.

1:45: Making progress on Rian's patch. I stayed here all a.m., including a nap. Put together the bike for the first time in a while, which involved a tube change and adjusting the twisted rear rack.

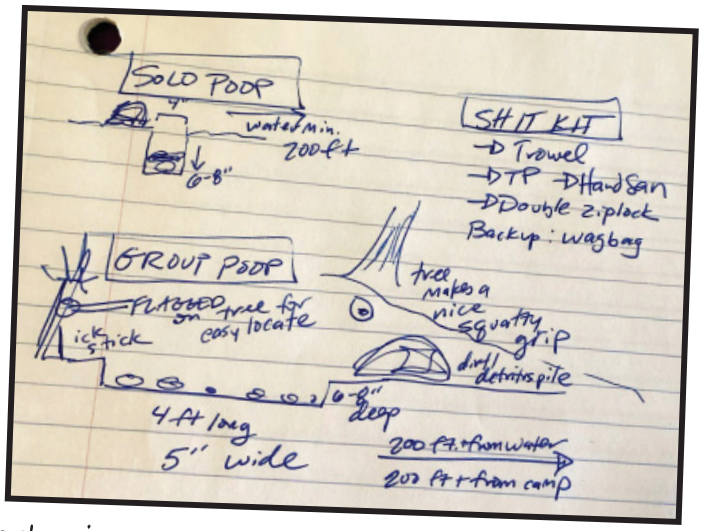
6pm: Back from my ride, and who is here but Johansel! He aborted his own adventure plans due to the rain threat, he says - tho here, it barely even sprinkled. He says the AT Lodge was full, so he spent $80 on a hotel room. Also says we're getting a new crew member, Richard, switching from the team Jean went to, starting Monday. I have no recollection who Richard is, but I hope he likes the tofu I have planned.

As for the bike ride! I found the KP Dam campsite, but no dam. Further upstream, or removed, perhaps? Lots of nice little riffles and pools on the brook there, though. The 0.8 mile Forest Interpretive Trail had a very nice little brochure/zine to go along with it. Flat, with lots of species ID markers. The two aspen here are bigtooth and quaking/trembling aspen. Fire scarred stumps from ~100 years ago. In 2013, the area had a big tornado-induced stand fall. There was also a case with a beaver jaw on display. Three miles further, the map showed a tiny gated road labeled "Black Brook Farm," with no explanation, which is just the type of thing I like to explore. So I did. I hiked down an overgrown skit road that the bike couldn't handle, and found a big sign: "Caution - Septic Waste Disposal Field. Hazardous Area - Do Not Enter" Alrighty then. I wonder if there really was a Black Brook Farm, or if that's a euphemism for all this shit people take in the park, a river of shits, and this is where they farm it?!

The bridge at Trout Brook crossing had NO graffiti underneath, which is a shame. It did appear to once have a swing, but the seat was missing. In the outhouse there, I found a cell phone, with texts about staying at Abol campground tonite - on the other side of the park. I left it with Ranger Bruce. 20 miles total biking - good to be using those muscles. yay!

July 15 - Trout Brook Farm
Finished Rian's patch and sewed it onto his pants this morning - I hope he will be pleased. Jo has had his headphones on all thru breakfast and we have not spoken a complete sentence, which feels odd. Also, I swear he literally made the noise "nom nom" while scarfing down his sausage and potatoes which made me chuckle. Nom.

and some chipmunks and red squirrels did a lil dance up close to me. My tent is quite rank, and upon mentioning this, Angie revealed that she has been handling this by hanging two dryer sheets in hers. Brilliant!



Much to Rian's chagrin, she is not sharing. 4 days to go this hitch - but really 3 and change, bc Tuesday is more americorps bullshit.

June 30 - Mount Chase
Decent day. Despite lots of annoyances with this group, I'm glad that at least we laugh a lot - so hard it hurt, multiple times today. Jean, Rian and I stumped. I have considerably more stamina and tolerance than the guys when it comes to this particular task. Stumping has given me new appreciation for how super cool trees are, with such great variety and wisdom and fortitude.

Had to poop mid-day, so I dug my own cathole. Disturbed some bees while doing so and got stung (on the hand, not the butt). Ow. Did not rain til this eve, so no more wet clothes, #blessed. Angie made alfredo using the pancake mix trick, and it was good. I think I'll start adding those alfredo packets to my own camp food rotation. Eva disappeared after work/before dinner. Jo said she had another awful time getting the saws started.

July 1 - Mount Chase
Team is still flaky, pants still dirty, and I've been in Maine somehow almost 2 months and haven't quit yet. Almost halfway through summer session, believe it or not. Slow start because Jean & Rian threw the hoist in a pile at the end of the day yesterday and Eva, Jo and I couldn't find it. I am back on morning pooping, though.

12pm I've been taste-test-offering my ridiculous snack flavors (acquired at Marden's, the surplus store). Today was roasted jalapeno bars. We all agreed they weren't as spicy as hoped. Not as much to stump today - but Jean's group has been skipping a lot. We might finish up and head back to TBF - we'll see.

9:45 - TBF Cabin - We're back! Ate pancakes! Extra snacks! A shower! Good music in the car thanks to Rian! Eva left the trailer

door open on the drive, so she and Rian and I went back to the parking area and found a glove, sponge, bleach bottle, and toothpaste in various spots along the entry road.

Everyone (including me for a change) is pretty hyped and up late, tho the cabin is too hot. I'm opting to snooze by the wood stove again, rather than in my smelly tent. Another ranger has apparently moved into the single room here, as the door is locked.

a previous iteration of "try this ridiculous surplus snack flavor" involved toasting these cherry cola oreos in the campfire.

July 2 - Trout Brook Farm
Angie, Rian and I went to do the Trout Brook Mtn trail, a small 3+ mile loop inside the Five Ponds loop. We made a super chill team, without the stress or drama of other personalities. An enjoyable day even tho it was hot (89 deg) and sunny.

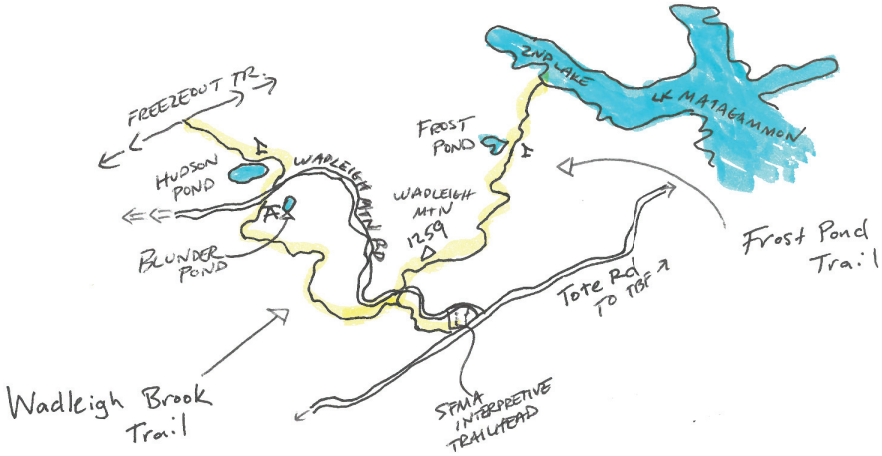
Back at Mount Chase, one day my pee bottle (a used Gatorade bottle with a marking on the cap) was missing from my tent. Later, I noticed it outside Jean's tent. I didn't say anything at the time but over dinner tonite, the appropriate moment came to ask him about it. He made a point to say that he realized it was a pee bottle once he smelled it, but said nothing about why he took it from my tent :D Rian couldn't stop laughing, Jean gave a half-pology and then went upstairs to sulk.

Angie correctly guessed 3 of 3 freeze-pop flavors in a blind taste test.

July 3 - Trout Brook Farm
This morning we did a mere 1.3 miles out and back on the Middle Fowler trail, and now its Bureaucracy Time @ Patten Library, where the dating sites are blocked but downloading a VPN is not! Earlier we ran into Ranger Liz on the Baxter tote road, showing Arianne's crew where they may be stationed soon near Baxter's Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA) in the NW portion of the park. Liz agreed that this whole "volunteer event" americorps requirement thing is not a good fit for our kind of crew but she said she'll try to finagle something that will work for us.

I actually looked up the Trail Specialist/Backcountry Ranger salary info on the Baxter website earlier. Get ready: $13-18/hour. Pretty fucking pathetic.

5pm - Holy moly - I have the cabin to myself! Leaving in the morning for Poa in VT... it's a 6 hour drive, longer than I thought. Perusing my atlas, I see there is an intriguing number of townships in Maine with Population: 1.



out of gas. Ranger Marshall says a big windstorm hit there last fall. Will have to take another extra gas bottle tomorrow.

I hosted pizza night and it was a smashing success. I did the crusts, sauce and cheese, everyone added the toppings of their choice, then I baked them 2 at a time. Now I'm enjoying one of my eight blueberry sodas. We also met Russ, who is the Area Ranger. He was insistent that Eva move her car out of the park, even tho she'll be doing so anyway at midday tomorrow (Fridays we only do half-days now that we're on a new hitch schedule), because he doesn't want Ranger Liz to yell at him. Wonder what he did to piss off Liz previously, lolol.

On trail today we found a spot where a hawk had devoured a blue jay, and a very old Game Refuge sign poking up from below ground. Frustratingly, I've been hearing lots of bird calls I can't identify, tho the Hot Cross Buns birds are ever-present too. I might bike down the tote road to the SFMA interpretive trail on Saturday to try and have a more leisurely hike.

June 13th - Trout Brook Farm
Again I am alone at the cabin, with our day done at 1pm. Going to stay here the next 2 nights, go to Patten on Sunday, then we all return. Did Burnt Mountain today. It turns out Eva ruined her chaps again yesterday, and also Jo forgot his brain bucket. Thus Angie, Rian and I held sawing duties. One of our trees was a real doozy. Very thiccc and twisty, and I got a good lesson on what not to do, when I got bound up twice, then Rian got bound up as well.

The others are driving elsewhere for the short weekend, and helping deliver all the stuff Jean left behind here. Ranger Rebekah delivered an amazing care package for me from a friend back home: 4 Clif Bars - Dried mango - several teas (I'll give these to Eva) - fancypants organic granola - fancy sunscreen & lip balm - a book: Remedios by Aurora Levins Morales - a new green bandana. Even Angie, who got TWO extravagant packages for her birthday last week, was impressed. I told the crew I get a lot of mail because "I have a lot of friends," and realized I haven't always thought of myself like that. #blessed.

Rian that he had cut his steel toe with a chainsaw... and then the disclosure from Jo that Jean had not been wearing safety toes the entire time... and Jo knew that! If he'd cut his boot the same way Rian did, we'd most likely have been driving him to the hospital. SMH. I don't want to get Jo in trouble about this but also, goddamn, he didn't seem to care one bit.

7pm - Rian's new catchphrase is "calm your tits". More patches to make! We're all tired and loopy at the end of the day. I traded Rian my promise to make him a GET OFF MY NUTS patch for his butt-ripped pants, for 8 BLUEBERRY SODAS and an ice cream sandwich. My team cleared lotsa blowdowns today but still didn't finish the loop. Jo & Rian had very few on Traveler Mtn, and also used the chainsaw to scare away an encroaching bear. Perhaps related, nearby they found ripe blueberries.

Radio gossip: the helicopter drop at Chimney Pond has been delayed to due storms in Bangor. Ranger Ian at Russell Pond is setting out to try and find 2 dudes seen biking nearby, which is very much not allowed on the trails

July 11 - Trout Brook Farm
Jo, Eva and I today finished Middle Fowler. We saw two amazing campsites, and a couple fishermen. Radio gossip: a hiker has become separated from his party of 5 near Chimney Pond. Found a bluejay feather and some big-ass woodpecker holes.

Today's weird Marden's food taste test was Strawberry Nut M&Ms. My teammates did enjoy the mild fruity flavor. I'm pondering this coming weekend's logistics. I don't wanna drive far. Jo says we are not actually going to do Americorps Bureaucracy time this week because he "just doesn't want to", which is reasonable.

I am supposed to be on duty as Eva's sous chef for dinner. She snapped at me when I asked how she was planning to cook the chicken wings. "I know how to cook!" Then she asked if anyone knows how to cook chicken wings.

We at last met Ranger Marshall, the one storing his things in the private room on our side of the cabin. He's quite friendly and seemed curious about us all.

I'm finding myself looking at Cory's face more and more lately. Tomorrow we make our 1st visit to the SFMA to start on the Wadleigh Brook and Frost Pond trails. Dinner was not good... perhaps the 1st thumbs down for me. I traded Jo my salmon packet for some of his hummus. Thrilling trail life, this! Oh! - We convinced Rian to do his nails sparkly green, and Jo sparkly purple.

July 12 - Trout Brook Farm
It's Thursday, and Rian wore his FRIDAY boxers. Jo and I did Wadleigh Brook. Fewer mosquitoes, but tons of flies, some of em big and chompy. I think they are attracted to the dark blue MCC tee I've been wearing, so I've been putting on a white long-sleeve I got at a yard sale last weekend in VT. Lots of BIG blowdowns here - we even ran

10pm - Being here alone is great. Tho I did see a fat mouse bold enough to scurry across the floor past my pad. I'm sleeping in the kitchen, as it's cooler than outside, and I don't wanna take down my tent in the a.m for the sake of an early start - I also have to take cabin trash to the transfer station. Keep yr distance please, mousey. Nice firefly show outside as usual. Wrote Mars a card to include with my zine, hopefully they'll get it for reading material next hitch.

July 4 - Trout Brook Farm - fuck da fourth!
5:30am - Didn't sleep so well... kept hearing mousey noises - and/or maybe Petra noises? Plus it gets light sooooo early - I neglected to factor that this is the east side of the cabin. Back to by the woodstove next time. Gonna need some caffeine on the road.

July 5 - Plainfield, VT
At Poa's lil cabin - emphasis on lil (one small room on the bottom, ladder, one small room on the top) - where they've moved from the yurt. Many good things keeping me busy and tired since arriving:
--I first went to Poa's housesit in a nearby town, with 2 ridiculous doggos, as well as a cat - who had gone missing. We took one dog for a walk, and the dog found the cat in the bushes along the road! However, we when returned, we found doggo #2 had been inadvertently locked in a 2nd story bedroom when the wind slammed shut the door. Poor pup clawed the door frame to shreds before JUMPING OUT THE 2ND STORY WINDOW (he was ok).
--I beat the Gorham, NH 4th of July parade by about 2 minutes. Also passed a store advertising "Antiques & Junque".
--The lil used bookstore in Plainfield is so fuckin cool. Oodles of cheap books and a big free shelf. I got Sand City Almanac, a 1948 Girl Scout Handbook, a 1901 art book for Linden, a fun animal book for another friend, and a book about restoring wolves to Yellowstone.

July 6 - Plainfield, VT
Woke up at Poa's cabin and we barely put clothes on all morning, it was lovely. The cool front has arrived. Poa's not up for the same sexy shenanigans as last time, so I entertained myself naked in the woods outside. #blessed. Still, the touch and snuggles and general comfort with each other is so refreshing and puts me at ease.

Currently I'm in Montpelier while Poa is making wood-fired pizza for a pop-up shop, which I'll bop over to soon. Did my laundry. Mended pants pocket at a cafe. Walked past the tiniest U.S. state capitol building, sent some emails. Tomorrow Poa works at the farmer's market, so I'll meet them there, grab some veggies, and head out for Mount Blue State Park mid-morning.

I am peeing SO MUCH, used the bottle 3x in the car bc there are no public fuckin potties here. Amusingly, it seems in Vermont, people can get license plates like "3". I even saw "69"!

July 7 - Mount Blue State Park, Maine
Woke up early this morning upstairs in bed with Poa. The downstairs sun window/bed/nook is very pleasant, but so is waking up with another babe of which downstairs there is only room for one. They left

for the market in Montpelier while I lingered, took some nakie photos for Linden, then got to the market around 10. Got some kale, mixed greens, a big juicy tomato, a couple red potatoes and 2 yummy rolls. Poa was joined in pizza selling duties by another total hottie, whose Lake Champlain Maritime Museum t-shirt was emblazoned on the back with a big patch reading SNUGGLE THE PARADOX. They gave me a lovely spinach/red onion/ricotta slice and I was on my way.

When I arrived at Mount Blue, an MCCer was at the gatehouse! Embarrassingly I don't remember her name, and I didn't get it - I was pretty frazzled from driving and I hope I didn't come off unfriendly. She was excited to see me, though - we'd talked some at training. We talked about Baxter and she says she wants to come visit us on the north side, so I hope that happens. It's only about 330, but I fried up some fish I bought on the way with lemon, greens and tomato... it's sooooo good.

9pm - Stumbled into a chainsaw-carving demonstration happening by the nature center here, and ran into MCC Sara, who was selling raffle tickets! I redeemed myself with a friendlier demeanor, and learned that she and GRACE are stationed here on a mini-team for the season. Before that, I sewed up my silk shirt that had ripped, and made a GET OFF MY NUTS quasi-embroidered patch for my carhartt flannel :D

July 8 - Millinocket
Pretty much perfect sleeping weather last night. Did a quick hike and now it's 10:30, about to depart for Baxter HQ in Millinocket, then Patten. Saw Sara again, as she was delivering a shopping list for the nature center, including gourmet fish food. The fish there won't eat the regular stuff, she says.

There was an enormous pile of empty watter bottles at the recycling station here. I looked at my own water jug label, which I keep refilling from tap. Poland Spring = Nestle, turns out. It lists all the communities they take water from so people can have their single use bottles. Fuck em.

9pm - Trout Brook Farm - Big news here - Jean has been moved to another team. I first heard something was up when I ran into Rian & Angie at Baxter HQ, where it so happened they'd already picked up my mail for me: a small package from Linden of a letter, spice mix (!) and a chocolate bar. Apparently there was an "incident" at the AT hostel involving noise complaints - what actually happened is unclear, but the end result was that being a small town, Baxter and MCC both heard about it, and Jean has been switched to another team, out of Baxter.

Seems like we'll be 5 from here out... however, Eva is currently absent too. She told Rian she'd be late, so we came into the park without her. The gate closes at 10, though, so if she isn't here by 10:20 or so, we'll have to just wonder. Jo started a fire and provided smores ingredients. We all gave detailed retellings of our weekends... I went last and everyone lost interest halfway thru, lolol. But good LORDE I'd

delicious.

rather have had my lovely weekend than any of theirs!

In my tent again - hot inside, cool out here. Our unknown ranger roommate was here - there's a new futon in the kitchen area. Apparently he's gone tonight, tho. Jo used an entire plastic bag for one single head of garlic from the store. He did not appreciate me chiding him for this.

July 9 - Trout Brook Farm
Windy, sunny and warm today. Eva arrived at 6:15am.

7:30pm - A mostly successful day. It is much much quieter without Jean, as all have commented on. Eva, Rian and I did the Middle Fowler Pond trail, 3 miles to Barrell Ridge Peak, a very pretty 2100 ft. Cached items there and shall return tomorrow.

Eva had some grumpy things to say to me - "since you're pretty much the assistant team leader now that Jean's gone..." I am trying to figure out what to say to get across that I do not, and have never, intended to act like an authority figure, but I do have an interest in responsibility/safety/good work here, and this is why I sometimes say certain things in the group (also, I'm the oldest here, and easily most curmudgeonly. The responsible oont, as has been said). Unlike many other work settings, despite my anarchist sensibility I think it does actually make sense to have a leader designated for when difficult situations arise in the wilderness. Not that consensus decision making shouldn't be the norm most of the time.

Somehow we got to talking about ranked choice voting and Jo said "It's too weird." I explained the benefits of it and he said, "Well, I don't trust people." :D It's curious how he got to be so conservative about a lot of things...

More bear poop than usual today. No hikers (that's the norm). Tomorrow, Jo and Rian will start on Traveler Mountain... we're gonna be running out of trails to do before long!

July 10 - Trout Brook Farm
Eva, Angie and I are continuing where left off yesterday. She and I screamed at each other a little bit after our morning circle, but then all was well. I don't think that's happened in our crew yet, at least that I've witnessed. It was partly precipitated by the disclosure from